MAARTEN VERKERK, GERRIT GLAS AND SUZAN SIERKSMA-AGTERES

THE INTELLECTUAL LEGACY OF Herman Dooyeweerd

1894-1977

A Hopeful Philosophy for Our Time

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A HOPEFUL PHILOSOPHY FOR OUR TIME

MAARTEN VERKERK, GERRIT GLAS
AND SUZAN SIERKSMA-AGTERES

TRANSLATED BY DAVID HANSON

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ORIGINALLY
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THE INFLUENCE FIRST OF THE NEO-
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THE GREAT TURNING POINT IN MY
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ROOT OF THOUGHT
ITSELF [...].

HERMAN DOOYEWEERD
(*NC*, I, p. v)

PREFACE

In the preface to *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought* (hereinafter NC), the Dutch philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd summarises his philosophical development in just one sentence. He tells us that when he started his studies the well-known philosophers Kant and Husserl swayed him powerfully, but that he was able to break free of their influence when he discovered that philosophical thinking itself has a religious root or origin.

That claim will certainly raise eyebrows. Perhaps the most pointed riposte will be how one could substantiate it philosophically. At first glance, it flies in the face of an important premise of modern philosophy: its thinking must be rational, scientific and, accordingly, neutral. Reason, after all, is believed capable of understanding the world and humanity within it by thought itself. In other words, a really modern philosophy must eschew all religious influences. Yet Dooyeweerd is telling us that every philosophy – including modern philosophy – has a religious origin.

We have written this book for people who want to make the acquaintance of Christian philosophy. Herman Dooyeweerd elicits our special interest because he interrogated the relationship between faith and thinking thoroughly. In that intellectual exploration he wanted to do justice to the Christian tradition and to the importance of Christian faith in his own life; that explains his use of religious terminology. At the same time, he had the desire to develop a philosophy that could play a part in rational debate: and that explains his, sometimes idiosyncratic, use of philosophical terminology. Four questions are threaded through the chapters of this book. This is what we have asked:

1 Why is Dooyeweerd's philosophy so radical?
2 What critical questions does he pose to modern Western philosophy?

3 What contemporary problems might this philosophy solve?
4 How could philosophers and others who are just interested in philosophy benefit from this philosophy – regardless of their religion, worldview or philosophy of life?

Dooyeweerd's work is not easy to read. That is mainly due to the fact that he raises the most fundamental questions of philosophy. He ran into many terms and concepts in philosophical usage that lacked the clarity, or were too poorly thought out, to answer those fundamental questions. That is why, like many other scholars, he developed his own vocabulary. In this introduction, however, we shall be using readily understandable language as much as possible and will introduce only the most important technical Dooyeweerdian terms, furnished with explanations.

The book consists of two parts. In the first we discuss Dooyeweerd's philosophy. Its chapters all have the same layout. Each starts with a striking quotation and is followed by a short 'Intro'. Next, we outline the 'Problem' that Dooyeweerd saw, the 'Context' in which that problem had confronted him and the 'Core' of his solution. In the section 'Elaboration', his solution is described in a more elaborate and systematic way. We then discuss the 'Evaluation and critique' that this part of his philosophy has received. And we bring each chapter to a close by focusing on 'Today' and explaining how Dooyeweerd's approach helps us to rethink and come to terms with contemporary problems. In the final chapter of this first part, we discuss the reception of Dooyeweerd's philosophy. We show how his ideas have been taken up unexpectedly all over the world, not only by philosophers but also by a broad swathe of students and academics.

In the second part, we look into the 'application' of this philosophy. We show how professionals, engineers and scholars in different disciplines use his ideas to understand fundamental questions and problems in their own areas of scholarship and expertise; and how they take them a step further. A rich palette of topics is reviewed: among other things, the development of meaningful technology, the normative evaluation of economic progress, the emphasis on public justice as the core task of government and the need to see healthcare as a normative practice.

While this book was being written, the subtitle more or less suggested itself. Dooyeweerd's philosophy offers a *hopeful* perspective in showing that despite fundamental differences of views on humanity, society and the world, respectful dialogue between philosophers, scientists and professionals is possible. Philosophers, engineers, politicians, economists, healthcare providers and other professionals all over

the world apply it to various practical problems. Dooyeweerd's philosophy thus is also highly *relevant* for this day and age, as its ideas, concepts and theories offer a surprising perspective on pressing issues of our time.

Some advice to readers: in this book, all references to particular chapters concern chapters of this book and not to one in the publication under discussion. Italicisation within quotations is always original and not our own. Abbreviations of Dooyeweerd's works are explained in the 'Literature' section at the end. And for readers who want to delve deeper into a particular topic we make suggestions in the chapter 'Recommended Reading'.

PART I

DOOYEWEERD

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IF I CONSIDER REALITY AS IT IS GIVEN IN THE NAÏVE PRE-THEORETICAL EXPERIENCE, AND THEN CONFRONT IT WITH A THEORETICAL ANALYSIS, THROUGH WHICH REALITY APPEARS TO SPLIT UP INTO VARIOUS MODAL ASPECTS THEN THE FIRST THING THAT STRIKES ME, IS THE ORIGINAL *INDISSOLUBLE INTERRELATION* AMONG THESE ASPECTS WHICH ARE FOR THE FIRST TIME EXPLICITLY DISTINGUISHED IN THE THEORETICAL ATTITUDE OF MIND.

THE COHERENCE OF ALL THE MODAL ASPECTS OF OUR COSMOS *FINDS ITS EXPRESSION IN EACH* OF THEM, AND ALSO *POINTS BEYOND* ITS OWN LIMITS TOWARD A CENTRAL TOTALITY, WHICH IN ITS TURN IS EXPRESSED IN THIS COHERENCE.

THIS UNIVERSAL CHARACTER OF *REFERRING* AND *EXPRESSING*, WHICH IS PROPER TO OUR ENTIRE CREATED COSMOS, STAMPS CREATED REALITY AS *MEANING*, IN ACCORDANCE WITH ITS DEPENDENT NON-SELF-SUFFICIENT NATURE. *MEANING* IS THE *BEING* OF ALL THAT HAS BEEN *CREATED* AND THE NATURE EVEN OF OUR SELFHOOD. IT HAS A *RELIGIOUS ROOT* AND A *DIVINE ORIGIN*.

HERMAN DOOYEWEERD (*NC*, I, pp. 3-4)

1
MEANING

INTRO

'Significance' and 'meaning': weighty words, even for philosophers! What makes some things more meaningful: for me, or for others, or for our culture? We tend nowadays to see ourselves as creators of significance. We attach significance to our contact with people we feel close to, or to what we accomplish, or to our own ideals. Real significance or meaning doesn't emerge on its own. Most of us think we have to bestow meaning on the world around us because, taken in itself, reality lacks any meaning or purpose.

But isn't that a bit one-sided? Moments of significance sometimes overwhelm us. A majestic vista can do it. Or we're struck by what someone says or does. Those meaningful experiences clearly come from outside. So, meaning isn't always the product of our activity or imagination. When it doesn't come from us, where does it come from?

The quote we set at the head of this chapter is not an easy one. In Dooyeweerd's view, meaning has to do with a more basic totality, with coherence and relationships. He associates 'meaning' with 'expressing', 'bearing reference' and a 'divine origin'. It's a difficult matter, but we can't avoid starting there.

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PROBLEM: HOW CAN THINGS BE SIGNIFICANT AND MEANINGFUL?

This book highlights the work of the Dutch legal scholar and philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977). Hardly any philosopher ever fought more radically against the idea that reality has no deeper meaning and that it's up to us to generate its significance and purpose ourselves. He was convinced that reality is meaningful in all its facets, or, put even more strongly, that it 'is' meaning and purpose from start to finish.

That belief is nourished by a tradition known as 'neo-Calvinism'. Neo-Calvinist thinkers like Dooyeweerd align themselves with the ideas of the French-born theologian John Calvin (1509-1564), one of the pioneers of the Reformation.

It's a long journey from Calvin to Dooyeweerd and we shall skip the intermediate steps in this chapter. More will be said about them later, especially about the work of Abraham Kuyper, Dooyeweerd's most important predecessor. But here we explain how Dooyeweerd translates his neo-Calvinist beliefs into philosophy.

We look first at how philosophy and *worldview* are related. That connection needs to be clear if we are ever to grasp how Dooyeweerd defends his assertion that reality is full of meaning and purpose. Can it be supported philosophically? What role does worldview play in substantiating that claim?

CONTEXT: CALVIN ON CREATION

We sketch out first what mattered to Calvin and confine our outline to the most salient points. The 16th-century Reformation was a religious movement critical of the theology and practice of the Roman Catholic Church of that time.

Calvin and other reformers believed the following, among other things:

1. The whole of reality is God's creation. Nothing exists by itself and for itself, disconnected from God. All reality depends on God for its existence and its persistence from moment to moment.
2. Everything that exists was created with its own nature. There is therefore tremendous diversity along with intricate and complex coherence and order.
3. Every human being stands in direct relationship with God. Calvin believes that they all have direct access to God. In the Catholic tradition, that access is negotia-

ted by clergy. Calvin objects that this easily leads to abuse; in his time, you might need to pay a priest, for example, to put in a good word for you with God.

4 Humans are imperfect and apt to do wrong. So, their access to the holy God is not a matter of course. They need rescue ('salvation'), and salvation requires faith. We are saved by faith – and only by faith (*sola fide*). Faith means surrendering yourself to God in service and placing your trust in God. Calvin opposes the (Catholic) focus on 'good works' which he saw as usurping the place of faith as the way to God in the Catholic tradition.

5 Humankind has the calling of stewardship. Humans have a task in this world. That task, or calling, consists of making the creation (the earth) flourish. They do that as stewards, entrusted with things like land, goods and talents. People don't own the earth. It's not their property. Even their individual gifts and talents haven't come from themselves. The earth is set up in such a way that it answers the purposes that God has in mind for it. Each person is a co-worker with God in realising these intentions.

These are the starting points in Calvin from which Dooyeweerd sets out.

CORE: IT ALL REVOLVES ROUND 'MEANING'

Dooyeweerd 'translates' those ideas into two basic philosophical thoughts. The first is this: the world does not just happen to be there as the product of processes determined by time and chance. Reality is intrinsically meaningful because it reveals God and points towards Him (Figure 1.1). If our reason were not so imperfect, we would see at once how God expresses Himself in reality and what He wants with creation. We would also see how every 'nut and bolt' of reality refers to Him as the creator and sustainer of the cosmos. These two ideas form a unity: created reality *expresses* who God is and *refers* to who He is. Dooyeweerd generally quotes very little from the Bible, but when it comes to this foundational thought, he does. He quotes the apostle Paul's letter to Christians in Rome, which tells us that all things are 'of and through and unto God' (Romans 11:36).

The meaning of the words 'express' and 'refer' can be grasped from the art of painting. Claude Monet, an impressionist painter from France, wanted to *express* in his paintings how he experienced reality (emotion, expression). When you see one of his paintings in a museum, you say, 'That's a typical Monet'. That is, the painting *refers* to its creator (Monet). Similarly, Dooyeweerd uses the words 'express' and 'refer' for the existence of reality.

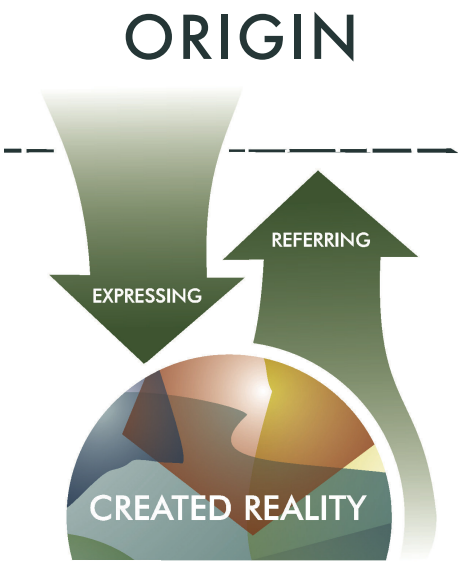


Figure 1.1 This figure illustrates how the multi-coloured, created reality refers to its Origin and is, at the same time, an expression of that Origin. The Origin remains fundamentally distinct from the creation, however, and lies beyond the reach of human investigation. As we shall discuss later in the chapter, 'God' is a 'boundary concept' for philosophical thinking. That is what the horizontal line represents. ⏎

This is a radical perspective. It accentuates above everything else the relationship of what exists to God. Nothing exists in itself. Everything is sustained from moment to moment by God. Everything that exists *expresses* who He is and what He wills, and, at the same time, everything points to or *refers to* Him. It's for this coordinated duo that Dooyeweerd supplies the term, 'meaning'. We are now back among those pregnant words in the statement with which the chapter begins: 'Meaning is the mode of being of all that has a creaturely nature.' Unpacking this heavy statement from back to front, we find that the existence of created things is distinct from the nature of their origin. Then we find that creatures are 'fashioned', called into being by God to exist in certain ways. These ways constitute their 'way of being'. And the ways in which things exist can be summarised as 'meaning', in the sense of 'expressing' and 'referring'.

This leads to a second fundamental thought. There is enormous diversity in how this 'meaning' manifests itself in reality. Yet, at the same time, there is a powerful coherence and order in all this diversity. In the following chapters we will explore this diversity, order and coherence. To summarise, 'meaning' is a core concept in Dooyeweerd's philosophy. It is first of all about expression and reference, and it furthermore relates to diversity, order and coherence in reality.

ELABORATION: NEW LIGHT ON OLD PROBLEMS

Much has been said about how Dooyeweerd translates Calvin's starting points into basic philosophical ideas. Can it be right to say that something 'is' meaning? Surely things only 'have' meaning? But the intention is clear enough. Dooyeweerd gives the term 'meaning' new coverage. Meaning is the core of everything that exists. In fact, it's the most profound and fundamental thing we can say about reality. Reality is meaning because everything that exists consists, at its core, of expression and reference.

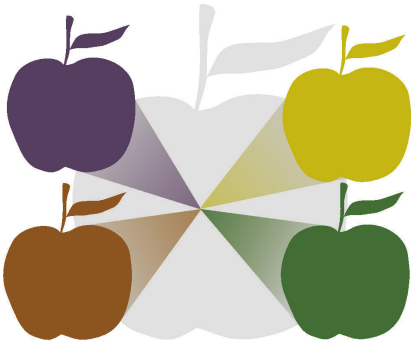
That is an invigorating idea. We will use three philosophical problems to illustrate this: the problem of properties and their bearers, the question of the limits of thought, and the issue of the '-isms'.

PROPERTIES AND THE BEARERS OF PROPERTIES

Dooyeweerd's idea flatly contradicts the common and dominant philosophical opinion that things and processes in reality consist of properties and whatever possesses or 'bears' those properties (Figure 1.2). Properties belong to a 'something' and that 'something' is their bearer. Thinkers have used terms like being, matter, substance, fundamental particles, life force, energy and information to refer to such bearers. But the bearers are themselves indeterminate, just the hatstand on which everything more specific is hung.

Dooyeweerd raises two objections to this thought and both flow from his conception of reality as meaning. The first is that 'being a bearer' is wholly unspecified and meaningless. It is free-floating, expresses nothing, points nowhere. Being that sort of 'bearer' short-changes God's relationship to His creatures. For Dooyeweerd, God is involved in them all the way down to the core, even when it's about 'being a bearer'.

The second objection is that the concept 'bearer of properties' is an abstraction; it's the product of a theoretical way of thinking. To be true, in theory you can certainly distinguish between properties and what they are the properties of. But in practice those 'bearers' never show up on their own. They are always interlaced with properties. In scientific research you may well distinguish between the 'material' of a thing and its properties. But when you start making an independent thing of the material or property-bearer, you forget that it is an abstraction. Philosophy has coined the term 'reification' for this fallacy (i.e. making a property or hypothetical



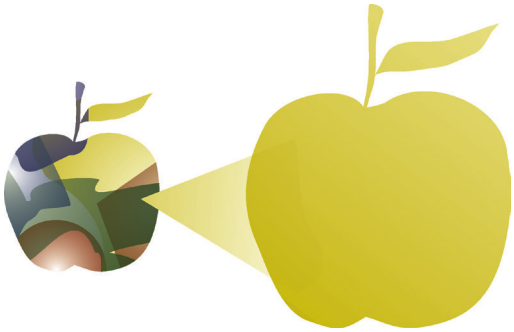
BEARER + PROPERTIES

MEANING

Figure 1.2 Many philosophers believe that real things consist of some neutral 'bearer' (shadowy apple in the upper image) and its 'properties' (coloured apples), which might be its shape, nutritional value, taste or price. Dooyeweerd holds that the distinction between bearers and properties is untenable. One of his arguments is that you never meet the various properties of a thing – the apple – apart from the thing as a whole (lower image). ⏎

feature into an independent thing; Latin: *res* [a thing]; *facere* [to make]). Dooyeweerd himself speaks of 'absolutisation' (from the Latin term *absolvere* [to loosen]). You absolutise something when you peel off a part or aspect of a thing and set it up as if it had an existence of its own (Figure 1.3).

What we are saying about 'being' as a bearer of properties also applies to terms like facts or events. Dooyeweerd disputes the idea that you can turn scientific facts into neutral, independent things; they only exist at the end of a process of abstraction. The fact that the earth is getting warmer isn't a free-floating or independent fact; it belongs as a phenomenon to our living space. That's why the alarm bells are ringing as global warming advances. It leads to climate change, famine and migration. We are saying, in other words, that there exist no neutral, independent



AN ASPECT MADE ABSOLUTE

Figure 1.3 The multi-coloured apple is the apple we experience in everyday life: not just a multiplicity of properties but a whole thing, a unity. The monochrome yellow one is an abstraction, created by taking just one aspect, prizing it loose (or absolutising it) from the whole and pronouncing that an apple is 'nothing but' its vitamins or fibre or calories. ⏎

facts, disconnected from other facts and from God. That representation of matters contradicts the Calvinist doctrine of creation which asserts that whatever exists is interlaced with everything else that exists. The totality of created reality is sustained by the Creator.

A LEVEL DEEPER

1.1 ABOUT 'BEING', LANGUAGE AND METAPHYSICS

When Dooyeweerd says that everything that exists consists, right down to its core, of expression and reference, you might want to complain that he is turning reality into a kind of language, or, in more difficult terms, that he tries to exhaust reality using only its symbolic function. After all, 'referring and expressing' do not tell us what something 'is' but what it symbolises. Is reality a kind of language? Is it nothing but symbol?

The problem lies in the little word 'is'. Are 'referring' and 'expressing' forms of 'being'? Or are they ways of talking about 'being'? A few comments on this are in order.

When Dooyeweerd calls 'meaning' the 'mode of being of all that exists in a creaturely way', his interest isn't focused on 'being' but rather on the 'ways' in which all things (and people) exist. He says nothing at all about 'being' itself. He refrains because he knows that scholars, philosophers in particular, are bound to what he calls the 'theoretical attitude of thought'. In that attitude you never grasp the whole, or even the essence, of things. Philosophers certainly dig deep, but what comes into view for them, what they take for the whole or the essence, turns out in fact to be the conceptual image of some component or aspect of reality. A chasm yawns between this conceptual indication and reality itself.

This explains why Dooyeweerd never passed himself off as a specialist in metaphysics, the branch of philosophy that deals with the theory of 'being', and therefore with the totality and the essence of things. In that, Dooyeweerd was in a certain way the child of his times. After World War I, hardly any European thinker dared to say anything as a philosopher about 'being'. One who did so was Martin Heidegger, but he presents too complicated a picture for us to consider here in any depth.

In saying that meaning, as the way in which all creaturely beings exist, consists of a combination of referring and expressing, Dooyeweerd is certainly stretching the usual meaning of those terms. We could call it a hyperbole, i.e. a hyperbolic way of speaking. But the direction of his thinking is clear: everything that exists must be thought, in all respects and radically, to have God as its origin. What exactly this origin relationship entails cannot actually be expressed in words, let alone in a philosophical theory. Ultimately, we can only guess. It's a mystery that leaves us stammering.

LIMITS OF THOUGHT

It should be clear that Dooyeweerd's grasp of reality as meaning is contrary to the idea that what exists is only the fortuitous product of meaningless physical and biological processes. In the discussion of whether reality is based on chance or design, Dooyeweerd is in the 'design corner'. Yet he would never want to prove, or logically assume, the existence of God or another divinity as some supporters of the 'intelligent design' movement tend to do. Dooyeweerd is certainly convinced of the purposeful order in reality and of its divine origin, but that is a religious belief that cannot be proved, no matter how ingenious one's reasoning is. It's a mistake to assume that human reason can say something about what lies beyond its limits. The existence of God can be surmised but never proved: 'God' is a boundary concept for philosophical thought. For Dooyeweerd, order and meaning are boundary concepts in the same way. They indicate something in philosophical terms that is experienced and known in faith but can never be proved logically.

This doesn't mean, however, that philosophy has to remain silent when it comes to God and to phenomena such as order and meaning. On the contrary, they are realities that reveal themselves in everyday experience because they are always there anyway. We can only say something about these realities with hindsight and experientially, even in philosophy.

Dooyeweerd is therefore one of a kind as apologist (defender) of Christian faith. He is squarely opposed to attempts to prove the existence of God with logical arguments. Because they are theoretical, those attempts inevitably lead to reduction. They assume, as it were, that you can set God as a research object on the imaginary laboratory bench. But getting a theoretical grip on God is impossible. Those who try to do so finish with an abstract understanding of God that falls short of the living God we know from the Bible and from faith experience. The same is true of the unspeakably complex and meaningful order that we know from everyday experience. It, likewise, cannot be reduced to an order imposed by natural and/or evolutionary laws. The meaning of reality also escapes human theory construction. Instead of a deep sense of connection with a reality that transcends our own, many scientists and philosophers construct a flattened concept of meaning, reducing it now to subjective preference, and then again to rational ordinances in nature.

Therefore, the truth of a religious position cannot be theoretically proved. It cannot be objectified and it resists theoretical formulations. It reveals itself indirectly, in conceptions that show coherence, in formulations that are consistent, in work that bears fruit and in lives that flourish.

ON '-ISMS'

If nothing in created reality exists 'in itself', then any theory that starts by asserting the independence of some aspect or part of that reality must be false. Dooyeweerd's critique of the '-isms' is based on this observation. The fundamental flaw in many forms of scholarship and philosophy is that they loosen parts or aspects of reality from their coherence with other parts or aspects and then make them independent and absolute. The result is one-sided and reductive. Reductionism points to something in reality being reduced to something else that is (unjustifiably) considered more real, more independent and absolute. In this way, materialism treats the material, physical character of reality as independent. According to the materialist, every phenomenon can be traced back to interactions between atoms and molecules, and beyond, to 'fundamental particles'. Biologism looks at everything through the lens of biology, so that, for example, mental phenomena are reduced to biological processes in the brain, and beyond, to evolutionary history. We will return to reductionism in the chapters on the theory of aspects (Chapters 4 and 5).

EVALUATION AND CRITIQUE

The neo-Calvinist worldview is importantly at play in how Dooyeweerd characterises and interprets reality as a philosopher. His view of meaning as the mode of being of reality is a philosophical translation of the Christian idea of creation. At the same time, Dooyeweerd always sees philosophy as primarily theoretical, with all the possibilities and limitations that it entails. A complicated relationship between worldview and philosophy ensues. On the one hand, philosophy must stand on its own two feet; on the other, this happens again and again by tuning in to pre-theoretical worldview intuitions and experiences. Those intuitions and experiences have a religious significance on Dooyeweerd's account of the Christian worldview. Ultimately, Dooyeweerd will try to justify his approach theoretically in the so-called transcendental critique (Chapter 8). But for the rest, he lets his philosophy speak for itself and only occasionally refers to the convergence between philosophy and Christian worldview.

Dooyeweerd's philosophy has appealed to a wide spectrum of people and is taught today at universities and other educational institutions both in the Netherlands and elsewhere. What resonates in it above all, is and has always been that Christians have something to contribute to the development of society, to technology, to the scholarly disciplines and to the development of the professions. This phi-

losophy shows that Christian inspiration does not place you 'out of order' in such discussions, but right at their centre, by defining you at the core. That core demands a broader and deeper justification than any philosophy or theory can offer.

There are undoubtedly other ways to relate Christian faith and philosophy. Dooyeweerd positions himself within philosophy to reflect on the major questions of his time. But he is also crystal clear about his neo-Calvinist convictions. In terms of approach (if not content) he resembles a thinker like Levinas, who tries to disrupt and open up thinking of his time on the basis of a religiously inspired (Jewish) radicality. While Levinas' main focus is on phenomenology, Dooyeweerd struggles with neo-Kantianism (see A Level Deeper 5.1: Kant and neo-Kantianism). Other thinkers start differently by revealing their worldview and by positioning themselves explicitly as Christian thinkers about the questions of their time. Abraham Kuyper is a good example of such a worldview-ish thinker.

We must remember that 'many roads lead to Rome'. Philosophy and worldview don't meet only in the academy, but also in public debate, in personal life, in conversations with others, in the context of professional practices and in spiritual and meditative contexts.

Dooyeweerd's thought has also provoked critical reactions from the start. One question that has been raised is whether his strong emphasis on the idea of creation places too heavy an accent on God's 'sovereign creator's will' and thereby underplays suffering, even in the incarnation of God. More broadly stated, isn't Dooyeweerd's philosophy of the meaning of reality too positive and high-minded when you look at all the injustice and misery in the world? What do you do with such a philosophy at the level of human experience? What does it help to 'know' that there is meaning if you experience nothing of it in your burden of pain, powerlessness, destruction, and malice?

These are legitimate and important questions. Dooyeweerd mainly addresses their cultural aspects. He is sensitive to the theme of evil in society. In his vision, evil is a parasite in a creation that was originally good. Putting that differently, evil (however powerful it is) can never operate outside the structures that are given in creation.

TODAY: GIVING MEANING OR MEANING AS GIVEN?

Can the experience of meaning come from outside us? That's what we asked ourselves in the introduction. Or is the experience of meaning something we generate ourselves, from within, from our creative capacities? Dooyeweerd's answer to these

questions is clear and distinct: reality is imbued with meaning and significance. Meaning and significance are there ahead of any kind of experience or construction of meaning. And that has to do with the fact that reality is created. Being a creature doesn't simply point to an isolated event at the beginning of history. It points to the permanent, confidence inspiring presence of a Creator who makes us (able to) feel at home in that reality and ensures that reality responds to what we do.

Dooyeweerd wants his idea of meaning to elucidate the myriad meaningful ways in which we are embedded in reality. Meaning provides us with primordial, embodied, multidimensional knowledge that connects us with the world we inhabit and enables our interaction with it. It's acquired in practical experience and may even be implicit and intuitive.

Today's inclination, dictated by scientism, is to deny our embeddedness and treat this naïve, everyday experience as impoverished. Scientism sees a gap between a material reality that is neutral, silent and meaningless and its interpreters. Our perception and logical reasoning must bridge that gap to impose meaning. Only primary, measurable qualities of reality (like temperature) are objectively knowable, say the empiricists. We must gain that knowledge by objectifying, abstracting and analysing. Secondary qualities (like the feeling of warmth and cold) are only subjective representations in the mind of the person having these feelings. They are imaginations that we project onto reality.

If we turn down Dooyeweerd's advice, we can exult in our subjective freedom and let our lives revolve around the creation of private worlds of meaning. Or we can take up the use of technical and scientific means to impose meaning on that neutral and meaningless reality around us. Dooyeweerd calls these attitudes the 'personality (or freedom) motive' and the 'science (or control) motive', respectively (see Chapter 3).

Those motives have diverged with more consequence than Dooyeweerd could have seen: on the one hand, the feverish pursuit of personal satisfaction and intensity of sensation in music, film, images, social media, and use of recreational drugs. On the other, an unrestrained technological exploitation of nature with dire consequences for the climate and the living world.

Without *given* meaning, without the idea of creation, life becomes restless. We search for meaning within ourselves and grab it from passing experiences. We leave our mark on the world by our activity and are inclined to derive our sense of meaning from what we do. But neither the experience nor the activity is ever enough. We always need more. From the point of view of creation, this endless searching and doing is unnecessary. Our activity and our experiences come in second place. First

and foremost, there exists a reality that even without us has more than enough to offer; a reality that refers to God as the source of meaning.

According to Dooyeweerd, meaning and significance are intrinsic. They live within reality itself. Meaning asks above all for disclosure, for an attitude of receptivity and for an open heart.

"

EVERY PHILOSOPHIC VIEW OF EMPIRICAL REALITY OUGHT TO BE CONFRONTED WITH THE DATUM OF NAÏVE EXPERIENCE IN ORDER TO TEST ITS ABILITY TO ACCOUNT FOR THIS DATUM IN A SATISFYING MANNER.

[P]HILOSOPHY CANNOT EXAMINE THE TYPICAL STRUCTURES OF INDIVIDUAL TOTALITY WITHOUT A THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF THEIR GIVEN UNITY. THESE STRUCTURES, TOO, MUST BE MADE A PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEM, AND THIS PROBLEM CAN BE NO OTHER BUT THAT OF THEIR TEMPORAL UNITY IN THE MODAL DIVERSITY OF MEANING, MANIFESTING ITSELF IN THE DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF REALITY.

ON THE LEVEL OF MODERN SCIENTIFIC THOUGHT THE NAÏVE CONCEPT OF THE THING IS IN THE PROCESS OF BEING BROKEN UP INTO FUNCTIONAL CONCEPTS. THIS IS DONE IN ORDER TO GAIN KNOWLEDGE OF THE FUNCTIONAL COHERENCE OF THE PHENOMENA WITHIN A SPECIAL MODAL ASPECT.

HERMAN DOOYEWEERD (*NC*, I, p. 83)

2
KNOWLEDGE

INTRO

How do we know the things we know? And on what grounds do we know them? Very timely questions in an age of fake news, complex social problems and scepticism about science!

We say we know something when we've observed it. I had a visitor today. I know that because I heard, saw and shook hands with the person in question. Three different senses were involved: hearing, sight and touch. But knowing can also rely on other sources of knowledge: memories, stories, testimonies, arguments, texts, images, diagrams and formulae. I read what others have written. Their knowledge had been acquired from yet others, and so on. Sometimes we are able to trace the start of such a chain, sometimes not. It's impossible for us to find out whether there ever was a Loch Ness monster. But it is possible to find out that nitrogen has a certain chemical structure. Once upon a time, someone discovered it. And that discovery has been confirmed countless times by others.

Scholarship plays an important role in establishing knowledge. Although the authority of science is questioned today – you may have heard it: 'Science is only some clever person's opinion' – many people still see it as the most important way to acquire knowledge. Some scientists, philosophers in particular, go a long way down that road. The neurophilosopher Patricia Churchland (1986) believes that scientific language will replace ordinary language.

We see in the quotation above that Dooyeweerd distinguishes between everyday experience and scholarly experience. In ordinary, naïve experience, we meet things and social structures as whole entities in relation to one another. In scientific experience, we set about analysing things and structures and we distinguish their various aspects.

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PROBLEM: THE LIMITATIONS OF SCIENCE

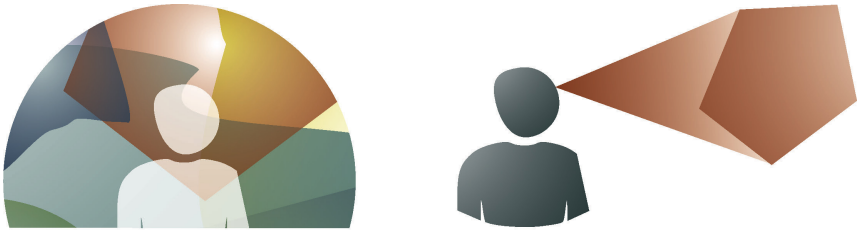
In this chapter, we address the question: what is knowledge? We do so by focusing mainly on the relationship between experiential and scientific knowledge. How should we see that? And what, in Dooyeweerd's view, is the big mistake in the prevailing ways of thinking about knowing?

CONTEXT: SCIENCE IN TIMES OF CHANGE

Dooyeweerd takes up this question at a time of great change. Classical positivism (or empiricism) looks like it's on the way out. According to the positivists, scientific knowledge can be understood as an edifice whose individual building blocks are unbiased ('objective') empirical observations. Logic (or mathematics) is the cement that glues the stones together. Using the laws of logic, larger wholes that obey certain laws or law-like relationships are constructed from the observations. But this picture of knowledge began to falter around 1930. Is there really such a thing as unbiased perception? Does language influence the organisation of our knowledge? Doesn't that approach remain impersonal, very much on the outside? The phenomenologists certainly think so. They turn away from positivism and back again to everyday experience, looking for deeper structures in that experience. Those structures turn out in fact to depend on basic ways of relating to reality. Knowledge and experience exist in all kinds of variants and, according to phenomenology, they always express some way in which people relate to reality. Another movement that distances itself from positivism is pragmatism. Knowledge, for pragmatists, is a kind of activity, of getting involved in the world, with tools of thought like models, concepts, methods and theories.

CORE: NAÏVE EXPERIENCE AND SCIENTIFIC MINDSET

At first glance, Dooyeweerd has a fairly clear view of knowledge. He makes a distinction between everyday knowledge and theoretical (or scientific) knowledge (Figure 2.1) and for him, everyday knowledge and experience is paramount. Scientific knowledge is always secondary and, not only that, it is also artificially created. Everyday knowledge is the source; scientific knowledge is at most an offshoot from that source.



NAÏVE EXPERIENCE

SCHOLAR'S MINDSET

Figure 2.1 In everyday (or naïve) experience we meet reality as much in its diversity as in the coherence of different things or structures (left image). In the scholarly mindset we look at reality with a specific focus. We forget the diversity, take little interest in the coherence and direct all our attention to one aspect; that might be the social or economic aspect of a family or business. ⏎

This is not to say that science doesn't interest Dooyeweerd or that he thinks it of lesser importance. On the contrary, he displays an almost encyclopaedic knowledge of all kinds of science and especially of their foundations. He is clearly fascinated by developments in mathematics, biology, law and sociology. Yet, for him, everyday knowledge always comes first, and in some sense that knowledge is the more important. That's because everyday experience yields the best panorama of the whole of reality, of its coherence and diversity. Experiential knowledge is integral; theoretical knowledge, by definition, is not.

Dooyeweerd calls everyday experience 'naïve' (Figure 2.1). But he doesn't mean 'childish'. He means untarnished by other influences, by the distorting pressure of theories perhaps, or philosophies or even ideologies. It's an idea that inevitably raises many questions. More on this later. But first, let's see how Dooyeweerd's story about science and naïve experience is put together.

Science, we repeat, is always secondary to everyday, naïve experience. This is such an important point for Dooyeweerd that he starts the English version of his main work with it. Loosely translated, this is what he says: there is something irreducible about everyday experience that scientific knowledge doesn't have. In daily life, we meet both diversity and coherence in the world around us. And the two features, the diversity and the coherence, go hand in hand in practice. They cannot live without each other and they make our experience of unity possible.

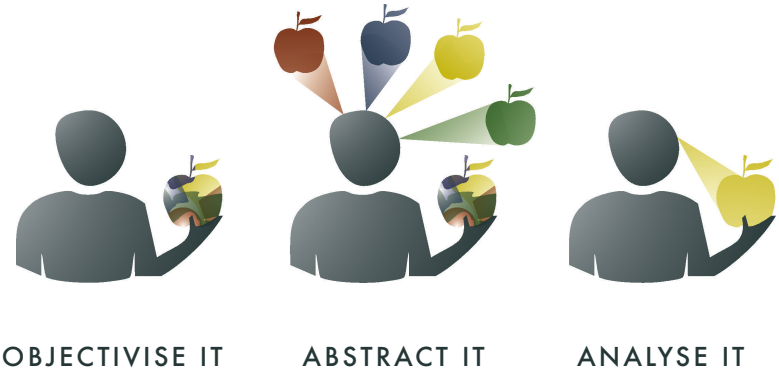


Figure 2.2 What happens in scholarly research on some thing or phenomenon? Dooyeweerd describes three different activities. The first is that you decide what you want as an object of study. It's apples – not apple trees or orchards (left image). Next, you distinguish the different aspects of the apple, the form for example, or the nutritional value, taste or price (middle image). Thirdly, you select one of those aspects for closer investigation – the nutritional value, for example. ⏎

However, that self-evident unity gets lost when you adopt a scientific mindset (Figure 2.1). This is the attitude you take up to study some particular phenomenon as a scientist. You devise an experiment, for example, and then make observations and formulate hypotheses within the framework of such an experiment. It's as if you bring reality to a halt to focus on one quite specific aspect or part of the bigger picture. In that specific aspect or component of reality, you are looking for certain (general, universally valid) patterns. In that process there is objectification, abstraction and analysis (Figure 2.2). 'Objectification' refers to the freezing of the image, i.e. you objectify what you want to study by defining the conditions that the experiment must meet: by standardising factors like ambient temperature or pressure, for example. 'Abstraction' (literally: pulling apart) refers to laying out the different aspects of a larger entity so that one of them can be set apart for study. 'Analysis' is the further investigation of the aspect you selected, to see if you can find something new there; a particular law-like relationship or another new finding.

The objectification, abstraction and analysis that you perform in science disrupts the coherence between the different aspects of the phenomenon you are studying. And the crucial thing for Dooyeweerd is this: science can never fully restore that

coherence, even if you have learned much about the different aspects and their interconnectedness. When you try to fit the fragments of new knowledge back into the bigger picture, it never quite works. Whatever new discoveries and interlacements you have just found never add up to the total picture.

The original coherence is implicit in our everyday experience, not even noticed as such. But it is certainly there. The theoretical mindset points the way to that coherence, but only in fragmented ways.

ELABORATION: TYPES OF KNOWLEDGE AND DIMENSIONS OF TRUTH

What does Dooyeweerd think has gone wrong in most theories of scientific knowledge? We discuss a few important themes.

OBJECT AND *GEGENSTAND*, SUBJECT SIDE AND LAW SIDE

The nub of the matter is that in many conceptions of scientific knowledge, two different things, an 'object' and a '*Gegenstand*', have changed places (Figure 2.3). What are those things? What does Dooyeweerd mean by them? We must follow him carefully because Dooyeweerd doesn't conform to accepted terminology, and what he wants to say is both subtle and important. For him, an 'object' is anything (and everything) that we interact with in any way in our everyday existence in concrete reality. But the German term *Gegenstand* is more specific; it denotes only what theoretical knowing takes for its object. As we think about scientific, theoretical, knowledge, we can trace all kinds of derailments back to that fundamental mistake, the confusion of object and *Gegenstand*.

For Dooyeweerd, the term 'object' doesn't only refer to objects of our thinking. It points to any conceivable component of concrete reality as it is subject to manipulation or influence by humans, animals or plants. In Dooyeweerd's philosophy, objects are concrete things. If a plant feeds on certain minerals, these minerals are objects for the feeding plant. If an ant drags a leaf to the anthill, that leaf is the object of the ant's labour. In the multitudinous doings of humans there's an endless number of such objects. I can use a tree for its shade; I can cut it down and sell it; I can look at it and admire it. I can also accumulate a lot of knowledge about it. 'Knowing it' is just one of many relationships that I can entertain with the tree.

OBJECT GEGENSTAND

Figure 2.3 Scholars may think they are investigating the integral realities they meet in everyday experience, but Dooyeweerd won't let them get away with that idea. The image on the left represents that integral reality with all its aspects and relationships. The other shows what scientific objectification and abstraction have done to it and what is left for scholars to study: a '*Gegenstand*'. Thinking it's still an object in concrete reality is a capital error. ⏎

A *Gegenstand* (German: 'what is standing in front of you') differs in two ways from what is meant by 'object'. First, *Gegenstand* is exclusively bound to scholarly (theoretical) activity and, therefore, to the objectification, abstraction and analysis that scholarship practises (Figure 2.2). Second, the *Gegenstand* of scientific knowing sits on the so-called 'law side' of reality. Dooyeweerd points there to the panoply of laws (and norms) that hold for reality. Along with that law side there is a side of reality that is subject to laws. Dooyeweerd calls it the 'subject side', using the term 'subject' in the sense of what is subjected to the law (Latin: *sub-* 'under'; *-iectum* 'thrown'). The subject is: everything subjected to the laws and norms that apply to reality. So, whether things function as subjects or objects (actively or passively) they do so in fulfilment of their roles as 'subjected to the law'.

Why does he make it so complicated? It's because, as Dooyeweerd sees it, and contrary to popular belief, science (theoretical study) doesn't carry out its research on concrete entities in reality, but on the relationships and regularities that hold for them. Those structures and regularities belong to the law side of reality, they come

to light in the progress of scientific objectification, abstraction and analysis. The idea does not seem at all revolutionary. Yet it is. And that's because scientists are so strongly tempted to take what they point to in theoretical terms for reality as it 'really is'. Dooyeweerd enunciates a firm principle on this point: science never takes reality itself as its object. What any science isolates as its object is only a certain aspect of reality, and then, chiefly, the law side of that aspect.

CRITIQUE OF THE PREVAILING THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

Approached in this way, Dooyeweerd's critique of current epistemology is quite understandable. He accuses the current theory of knowledge of levelling. It is 'levelling' in the first place because people treat everyday knowledge as if it were just a poorer form of scientific knowing. It flattens out the critical distinction between the concrete 'object' and the abstract '*Gegenstand*' and goes on to treat the concrete object as if it were a *Gegenstand*. It also lumps together everything knowable under the general term 'object' and so squashes the rich variety and many-sidedness of our experience of things in the concrete world into knowledge of 'objects' (what Dooyeweerd calls '*Gegenstände*').

This levelling has important consequences for how everyday experience is understood. Concrete experience is no longer multi-aspectual, sensory, dynamic, layered and pluriform. It is reduced to a thinking experience, namely of facts in the world that are there to be identified.

This theory of knowledge also has consequences for one's view of science. It suggests that scientific knowing is knowledge of concrete things in reality. Dooyeweerd denies this, as we have seen. Science starts with objectification and the abstraction of aspects of concrete reality. These aspects are then analysed as '*Gegenstände*', as scientists discover and create cognitive artefacts like definitions, abstract concepts, models, formulae, laws, patterns and the like. By definition, therefore, a distance is maintained between scientific 'reality' and the genuine reality of our everyday experience.

This view of science could be interpreted as a kind of anti-realism or nominalism. (Nominalism is the view that concepts do not represent reality but exist only in the mind of the knower.) Dooyeweerd always resisted that interpretation. The authors of this book interpret his view as both pragmatic and realistic. Science can best be seen as a form of action and interaction with the world that makes use of the cognitive instruments just mentioned (the definitions etc.). With those instruments, scientists

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2.1 COPY THEORY AND ITS CRITIQUE

The process of knowing is often described like this: human beings, as knowing subjects, focus their cognitive faculties on reality, identify particular phenomena there, store representations ('copies') of them in their consciousness and interact with them there.

What do scientists do? According to this 'copy theory', they too focus their cognitive faculties on reality and so make an 'object' of it. It is 'objectified' by eliminating every extrinsic and personal influence as far as possible. The objectified reality is then imported into the mind and transformed into a representation (copy) of reality. Two transformations have thus been carried out: first, from the reality into something that science can identify; and second, from that objectified bit of reality into an editable representation in the human mind.

This picture of human knowing activity is strongly criticised in many streams of modern philosophy such as phenomenology, constructivism and pragmatism. Dooyeweerd's view of scientific knowledge is one of the earliest critiques of the copy theory.

aim to 'disclose' specific *aspects of reality*. Disclosure here means developing those aspects in depth. So, the emphasis in his theory of knowledge falls on the disclosure of reality by experimenting, thinking and reasoning. The more traditional theory of knowledge (see: A Level Deeper 2.1) is not like that; it concentrates on what's going on *in the mind of the scholar*. It asks what we need to claim that knowledge is 'justified, true belief'. In that epistemology, knowledge is a copy of reality that resides somewhere in the human mind. For Dooyeweerd, theories, formulae, explanatory models and new concepts aren't copies in our mental space; they are tools that help us to deepen our comprehension and thus disclose reality.

To sum up, scientific knowing as Dooyeweerd sees it does not focus on facts that are separate from humans, neutral and objective, but rather on structural principles and regularities (laws and norms) that hold for that reality. Our scientific knowing is one form of activity alongside various other forms of activity. Theoretical knowing abstracts certain aspects from a larger whole and deepens them, by analysis. It is therefore not a neutral record of an objective factuality but focuses on structures and the law-like relations that hold for reality.

With this line of thought, Dooyeweerd criticises the prevailing opinion that scientific knowledge must be understood in terms of a subject-object relation, in which the subject switches off any personal involvement and the object is reduced to something factual and determinable so that one can get a grip on it with scientific methods and techniques. This reduced and abstract object is taken to represent reality adequately.

TRUTH AND REALITY IN FOUR PERSPECTIVES

Eventually, Dooyeweerd wove his theory of knowledge into an ingenious theory of truth. It is not only a theory about scientific knowledge but also about the activity of knowing in a broader sense. The core of what Dooyeweerd says is that there are fundamentally different types of knowing, and that those forms fit closely with how we, as humans, are anchored in and connected with reality. This is a further elaboration of the idea that human knowledge is embedded in relationships between people and the reality in which they live.

Truth is a multidimensional and perspectival concept. Each perspective corresponds to a certain way of embracing reality and is bound to its own horizon. After all, there's a boundary to all experience and knowing. Where that boundary or horizon runs depends on the different ways in which we experience and know. Together, these perspectives give us a rich palette of ways of experiencing and knowing. They presuppose each other but are nevertheless so different that they cannot be reduced to one another.

Dooyeweerd distinguishes four fundamental experiential perspectives on reality (Figure 2.4). Their different horizons are determined by specific intuitions that stem from the way we are embedded in reality.

The perspective of everyday experience is paired with the intuition of *individuality*. Every thing, living being or process is unique and is always undergoing change. Our everyday experience therefore changes all the time. Dooyeweerd calls that changeability 'plasticity'. He therefore speaks of the 'horizon of plastic experience'.

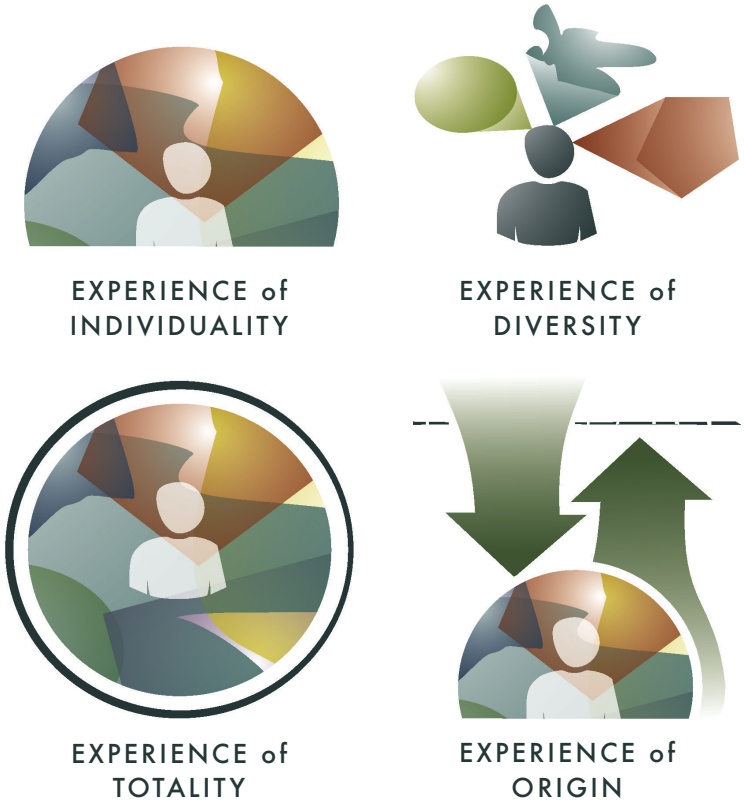

Figure 2.4 People experience and know reality in different ways. That's why different kinds of truth exist and not just a single truth; they depend on our stance in that reality. In everyday life (upper left image) we experience things and events as unique, many-sided and changeable. In theoretical experience (upper right) we address the laws and norms of particular aspects – physical, economic or moral, for example. The philosophical experience (lower left) shows us reality as a whole, its most important features being decided by our worldview. The circle in the illustration conveys the idea of totality. Religious experience (broadly understood) is imbued with some sense of reality's Origin (lower right) that acknowledges a limit (dotted line in the figure) to our knowledge of that transcendent Origin. ⏎

The perspective of scientific (or theoretical) knowledge focuses on the order and the law conformity in that changing reality. Its way of knowing is based on the ability to distinguish law-like relationships, and it corresponds to the intuition of *diversity*. Dooyeweerd means *modal diversity*, i.e. the difference between ways of functioning, how things exist (see Chapter 4). This diversity is anchored in the fabric of reality. Scholars unearth structure and law conformity in the study of the law side of reality. He speaks of the 'modal horizon of theoretical experience'.

The third perspective rests on the intuition that reality is a *whole*. It's a fundamental presupposition for all knowing. We can't know reality unless we accept that all that exists, somehow, miraculously, coheres in a whole. If we don't, the foundation under our knowledge crumbles away. Dooyeweerd (using a Kantian and neo-Kantian term) speaks in this context of a 'transcendental horizon'. He doesn't mean 'transcendent', something that reaches beyond our reality, but something that applies to the whole of our reality, as a necessary condition for our understanding of it.

Finally, there is a perspective defined by the intuition that reality has an *origin*. The origin is transcendent; it lies beyond our knowable reality. This intuition points towards the 'religious horizon' of our experience. As we saw in the previous chapter, all existence points to an Origin and that Origin expresses itself in all that exists. Reality's existence as meaning flows from its dependence on the Origin.

There is therefore no such thing as a comprehensive knowledge of the whole of reality. Knowledge is always in part, because it is constrained by the chosen perspective, the way in which one embraces and attunes oneself to reality. In this way, we see clearly once more why Dooyeweerd rejects classical metaphysics. As he sees it, metaphysics was governed by the notion that the essence or the whole of reality can be grasped theoretically. Not so! The totality is a precondition for all our knowing. It is presupposed and never the product of our knowing activity. Theoretical knowledge examines (law-like) structures, not immutable essences (which would be metaphysics).

Truth, then, has a multidimensional, perspectival character. Each perspective expresses a basic intuition that attaches to one way of attunement to reality. There are four such intuitions: of individuality (in everyday experience), of diversity (in scientific focus on the law side of reality), of deeper unity (if you tune in philosophically to reality as a whole), and of origin (if you allow yourself to be imbued religiously with the meaning character of reality). Reality is unique and changeable, yet at the same time it bears witness to orderly diversity. It also shows a deeper unity. This unity does not rest within itself but refers to an Origin (see A Level Deeper 2.2).

A LEVEL DEEPER

2.2 ORIGIN

Dooyeweerd uses the philosophical term 'Origin' to refer to God or the idols we fashion for ourselves. He speaks of the true (or an alleged) origin of meaning. The essence of what Dooyeweerd says is that not only humankind, but in fact the whole of reality, in its every fibre, expresses something of that Origin and at the same time refers to that Origin. This thought points to a powerful cosmic dynamic. We heard Dooyeweerd say (with Paul) in the previous chapter that everything is 'from and through and to God'. The origin dynamic makes it impossible to *not-respond* to God, that is, to live as though that relation to the Origin doesn't exist. People everywhere know the intuition of 'responsibility', of being held accountable. There is something irreducible about this responsibility; it points to the relationship with the Origin. Even if we suppress the intuition, we still stand in that relationship and we respond to it: we express it in our actions.

As we can now see, Dooyeweerd is by no means your average philosopher. When it comes to human knowledge, he isn't concerned with knowledge as a representation of reality or as a product of technical or intellectual imagination: a product that you can thereafter apply at will or project onto reality. Knowledge is based on a deepening of the relationship with known objects; a deepening that 'discloses' something in the knower as well as in the object. You are, yourself, enriched in knowing and at the same time you get to see more. How that happens depends on how you orientate yourself in reality. Dooyeweerd uses terms like adjustment, attunement, horizon and perspective for that. The most important ways of orientation express specific fundamental intuitions.

EVALUATION AND CRITIQUE

Dooyeweerd's view of knowledge and truth is original but has not gone unchallenged. Doesn't he exaggerate the contrast between scientific knowledge and everyday experience? Isn't it a fact of our time that everyday experience has been peppered with all kinds of scientific terms and insights? Valid questions! In many ways (via school, the press, social media, television, podcasts), popularisations of scientific insight have become part of our everyday knowledge. Our view of reality is influenced by that, of course. But that doesn't mean this has tarnished the meaning and character of everyday experience. Newly acquired scientific knowledge is contextualized in our own lives and gets to be made part of our everyday experience. When that has happened, in a mysterious way this experience once again demonstrates coherence and diversity. Scientific insights certainly influence our view of reality, but that doesn't imply that they fundamentally change the character of everyday experience.

Another point concerns Dooyeweerd's characterisation of everyday experience as 'naïve'. That seems a rather romantic notion in a time like ours, as if everyday experience were pristine and not susceptible of short-sightedness, deceit and obfuscation. But this is a time of fake news and many other forms of deception. Our attention is manipulated to a large degree, and led along by advertising, propaganda and the algorithms of social media. Our experience is by no means naïve. In fact, we have to work hard to protect our attention from unconscious and unwanted influences. It's a matter of the freedom of our thought and action. Manipulation of our attention threatens our intuitions about truth and spoils the purity of human experience. Yet Dooyeweerd would probably not deny any of this. He would emphasise that pre-theoretical assumptions and intuitions (on which our thinking proceeds) should always be critically questioned and examined. This interrogation should be guided by fundamental notions such as unity, diversity, coherence, meaning and origin. He would probably also want to emphasise today that it is a quest that we carry out together and not on our own.

TODAY: PRACTICES AND REDUCTIONISM

What attracts us to Dooyeweerd's approach is its applicability to practice and its contemporary relevance. This may not seem immediately obvious and to get there

we need to find a way through Dooyeweerd's somewhat idiosyncratic terminology. Once one has succeeded in this, Dooyeweerd's views appear to be both practical and relevant. He sees knowledge acquisition as an interactive activity and not as a detached and aloof process in the mind of the knower. The meaning of the 'products' of the process of knowing depends on the kind of interaction between knower and known, the context, and the expectations and interests of the parties that are involved. Knowledge is often equated with what you read in a book or what a teacher tells you. Dooyeweerd would say that words and texts, written or spoken, only find meaning in interactions. Outside interactions, they are indeterminate, artefacts without meaning.

This is extremely important for the current discussion of 'translation', the deployment of scientific knowledge in professional and other practices. Knowledge that may be self-evident to scholars suddenly seems to be less clear outside the classroom and to raise all kinds of questions. This became strikingly evident at the start of the coronavirus crisis. Scientific findings developed so rapidly that what we had understood only weeks earlier became irrelevant. The general public found that difficult to cope with.

Then, too, if we look at the complexity of the phenomenon of knowledge, Dooyeweerd's systematic philosophy offers many points of contact. The different meanings of a given concept can be made clear by looking at the practice in which it is applied. So, in physics, gravity is a fundamental physical concept, one of the four fundamental forces in nature. The meaning of the term is established in certain theories. Gravity is determined by the force of attraction between masses, and we can calculate it using certain formulae. But, when I'm in the lift, gravity is something else. I feel it. I'm heavier on the way up and lighter coming down. Feeling lighter and heavier depends on my direction and speed in relation to the pull of the earth. Two contexts – science and everyday experience – the same physical concept, with different experiences and meanings.

One of the most important conclusions of Dooyeweerd's philosophy is that theoretical thinking is always secondary and can never be a substitute for everyday experience. This matters greatly today when scientism and reductionism are rampant. Scientism would have us believe that only science can decide what is true and what really exists. Reductionism implies that, for instance, my feeling that the iron is now hot enough to use is nothing but the speed of molecular movement. Scientific knowing is by definition reductive. By using objectification, abstraction and analysis, the object is constricted to a *Gegenstand*, reduced to what can be pro-

cessed methodically, statistically and/or logically. In that processing, you discard much of the phenomenon in question: its individuality, the other aspects you paid no attention to, its embedding and coherence in the greater whole.

"FOR ALL KNOWLEDGE PROCEEDS FROM FAITH OF WHATEVER KIND. YOU LEAN ON GOD, YOU PROCEED FROM YOUR OWN EGO, OR YOU HOLD FAST TO YOUR IDEAL. THE PERSON WHO DOES NOT BELIEVE DOES NOT EXIST.

ABRAHAM KUYPER
(1998, p. 486; in Dutch:
1880, pp. 31-32)

3
GROUND MOTIVES

INTRO

Is it possible to practise scholarship and philosophy in a neutral way? Can you do your work as a scientist or philosopher without a worldview, an ideology or a religion? Abraham Kuyper didn't think so. He believed that every scientist or philosopher believes something and that the 'something' powerfully influences his or her thinking. Herman Dooyeweerd elaborated on this idea in his description of cultural ground motives.

PROBLEM: THE SOVEREIGNTY PROBLEM

The problem Dooyeweerd wants to solve is how God's sovereignty takes shape in everyday life. What he means by that is: what is the relation between God and the creation? By 'sovereignty' he is thinking of the recognition of God's lordship in all spheres of life. He observes that this lordship is no longer accepted by everyone or is inconsistently translated into the realms of politics and society. But if God is lord and master of creation, then nothing exists independently of that relation to God's 'being Lord'. Shouldn't this be the foundation for thinking about how God relates to creatures? What does that divine sovereignty mean for human vocation in the different spheres of society and science? And how do different parts of reality relate to each other? Dooyeweerd wanted to think through the consequences of God's sovereignty for the relationship between church, state and society. And then also what the sovereignty of God implies for the various sciences, such as mathematics, physics, economics, law, ethics and philosophy.

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CONTEXT: THE FIRE THAT BURNS WITHIN US

Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) expressed the principles of his thinking beautifully in the speech he gave on 20 October 1880 at the opening of the *Vrije Universiteit* in Amsterdam (now internationally known as VU University). In that speech he wonders why the Netherlands must have a Christian university. To answer the question, he goes back to the reformer John Calvin (1509-1564) who set the sovereignty of God in the foreground of his thinking. Kuyper emphasises that Jesus Christ claims 'all authority in heaven and on earth' (1998, p. 464). But this sovereignty was not and is not universally recognised. He and his university cofounders felt called and impelled by the voice of Christ: 'the fire still kept burning in our bones. There was One mightier than we who urged us and spurred us onward. We could not rest. In spite of ourselves we *had* to go forward.' (1998, p. 489; cf. 1880, p. 36).

Kuyper was deeply convinced that not only he, but every human being is driven by beliefs or standpoints. This holds for scientists too, therefore. In fact, he held the opinion that without belief in certain principles, you can't do science. Against liberals and others who claim that science can and should be neutral, he comes to the radical conclusion, 'The person who does not believe does not exist' (1998, p. 486; cf. 1880, pp. 31-32). That is why it was so important to have a place where scholarship would be pursued with the premise that Christ is Lord over all reality.

We can detect the spirit of Kuyper already in the thinking of the young Dooyeweerd. He wrote several articles about art during his student days. In his view, art too must be driven by the fear of the Lord and the sovereignty of Christ should stand at its centre. At the same time, he wrote an article for Christian student associations in which he urged the importance of worldviews. He wrote: 'For everything is illuminated from within, the entire world by the fire that burns in us' (Verburg, 2015, pp. 13-14).

In May 1922, Herman Dooyeweerd applied for the post of director of the Kuyper Foundation, the Scientific Bureau of the Anti-Revolutionary Party, a Christian political party founded in 1879 by Abraham Kuyper. He was 27 years old at the time. In his application, he stated that the scientific bureau ought to be guided by Kuyper's principles:

> [T]he method [...] in all our investigations [...] will have to be guided by the principles of the theory of knowledge which Dr Kuyper has set out in such a brilliant way [...]. Once the method has been determined, the first task will be to devote a thoroughgoing investigation to the fundamental problem of the entire Calvinistic view of law and society namely the problem of sovereignty. (Verburg, 2015, p. 39)

In October of the same year, he began his work as director.

CORE: REASON IS NOT AUTONOMOUS

We can sum up the core of Dooyeweerd's thought in the words 'reason isn't autonomous'. He strongly resisted the idea that reason – understanding, cognition and, in particular, scholarly knowledge – is independent. Its independence means that reason itself can decide what you should think about all kinds of questions. Dooyeweerd rejects this view. He thinks that worldview always plays a role. And even more forcefully, worldview largely determines how we think and act. This idea can already be found in the first report that he wrote for the Scientific Bureau in 1923:

> The Calvinist slogan that God's sovereignty must be recognised in all areas of life is of profound philosophical significance. It proceeds from the only correct premise that differences in life and worldview must be unconditionally determinative for both thought and action and that there is no neutral zone anywhere within which belief and unbelief can reach out to each other. (Verburg, 2015, pp. 44-45)

Dooyeweerd published his major work, *De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee* ('The Philosophy of the Law Idea') in 1935. It was later extended and published in English as *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought* (1953-1958) [NC]. In it he writes that thought is not neutral. He tells how he had tried, himself, to establish a relationship between the Christian faith in which the sovereignty of God is central, and philosophy in which the autonomy of reason holds sway. He admits honestly: all my attempts failed. 'The great turning point in my thinking', Dooyeweerd writes, was the 'discovery of the religious root of thought itself' (NC, I, p. v). In other words, every philosophy and every scientific theory is based on a definite standpoint of faith and implies therefore a religious choice. You can never prevent that. In fact, such a point of view and such a choice are prerequisite to thinking sensibly about reality.

ELABORATION: FOUR GROUND MOTIVES

How do you detect such religious choices? Dooyeweerd's response is: by investigating how specific scientific and philosophical questions are answered; questions about the meaning of our lives, the order in reality and the way in which we acquire knowledge.

Dooyeweerd summarises such a comprehensive religious option with the words 'ground motive'. Two meanings coalesce in this term. First of all, it's about a radical impulse that works in, or motivates, the human heart, its inspiration, passion and involvement: 'the fire that burns within us'. But alongside that, it's about the whole complex of fundamental convictions: the 'ground'. It is about starting points and principles. A ground motive is not about a personal feeling or an individual's psychological motivation, but rather about the spirit of the time as expressed in science, culture and society. Dooyeweerd distinguishes four ground motives in the history of Western culture: the ancient Greek, biblical Christian, Roman Catholic and humanist motives.

THE GREEK GROUND MOTIVE: FORM–MATTER

In Dooyeweerd's view, Greek thought was driven and determined by two opposed principles. One principle or pole is 'form' and the other is 'matter' (Figure 3.1). They are in conflict.

Look first at the matter pole. We find it back in the older nature religions characterised by belief in a divine life-stream in which matter is supreme. In the cyclic progress of this stream, plants, animals and people are constantly emerging in new forms. But these new forms simply come to maturity and vanish again. Everything that has its own form is doomed to perish. What remains is 'dark matter', controlled by blind and unpredictable fate. The gods of these nature religions are fluid and invisible. They have no fixed form or identity of their own.

The form pole we find in the new religion of the Olympian gods – the official religion of the Greek polis or city-state. That new religion was characterised by form, measure and harmony. The new gods stood outside the cycle of the divine life-stream. They had individual form and identity. For example, Apollo was the god of the arts and sciences and Dionysius the god of wine and of human civilisation. The gods were the cultural powers that sat enthroned on Mount Olympus and could be worshipped on earth in perfectly harmonious temples.

FORM | MATTER

Figure 3.1 Tension exists between the old nature religions and the new, Olympian worship. In the figure, the swirling, grey circles represent the dark, mysterious life-stream and uncontrollable fate of matter in the nature religions. The new religion's gods separate themselves from the life-stream but invest reality with form, shown by the stately temple. ⏎

Dooyeweerd argues that the new religion attempted to absorb the old ones, but the tension between shadowy mundane matter and the celestial forms persisted. That can be seen, for example, in regard to death. For the old nature religions, death was a dark fate that would strike unpredictably. In the new religion, the gods possess individual form and are immortal. They have the power to confer whatever form they wish upon matter. But it turns out that they have no power over the fate of mortals. In other words, the two worlds – of the murky life-stream and the form-giving power of the gods – are not well connected. This tension continued to dominate Greek thought and proved insoluble.

THE CHRISTIAN GROUND MOTIVE: CREATION, FALL AND REDEMPTION

Dooyeweerd identifies the Christian ground motive as the second in Western history. He derives it from the Bible as the motive of 'creation, fall and redemption' (Figure 3.2) and he sees it as a radical break with Greek thought.

This break is expressed immediately in the first word of this motive, 'creation'. In Christian thought, there is no 'dark matter' to which gods give form. Nor is there any blind and unpredictable fate. And there is not the slightest idea of gods feuding

Figure 3.2 Dooyeweerd summarises the Christian faith in three words: creation (harmony); fall (the fracture of relations between human beings, between God and humankind, and between people and the rest of the creation); and redemption (the cross achieves restitution of the broken relations, though traces of the fall into sin remain visible). This summary is a confession: in it he acknowledges biblical teachings. ⏎

among themselves at the expense of people. In the Bible, by contrast, God is portrayed as the Creator of an orderly heaven and earth. He created material things, the sun and moon, the birds, fish, plants, animals, and humankind. He created humanity in His image.

According to Dooyeweerd, a new thought is introduced by the second word of the motive – 'fall'. What we found in Greek thought is a struggle between two opposing poles: matter (obscure, inescapable fate) and form (with its reaching for order and harmony). Among other things, the struggle is expressed in human life, where the sensual desires of the body (matter) and the guidance of reason (form) compete for mastery. In biblical thought, on the other hand, evil has its origin in humankind itself. God had created the 'adam', male and female, in His image. and given them all the gifts and possibilities with which to represent Him on earth. Yet, at some point, they chose to turn away from God and go their own way: the 'Fall'. With this choice, evil was given free rein in the thoughts and actions of the human race.

The last word of this motive – 'redemption' – offers hope. In the end, in Dooyeweerd's judgement, Greek thinking offers no perspective. The evil inherent in the matter pole continues to exist and reason often remains powerless against fate. On

the other hand, the Bible offers hope in the form of a person: Jesus Christ. There are several aspects to this redemption. First of all, it relates to the removal of the guilt that arises from the evil that we do. Secondly, it refers to the renewal of the person by the Holy Spirit. This renewal takes hold where sin had enjoyed free rein: namely, in the heart of human beings. Finally, redemption encompasses the whole creation. Dooyeweerd speaks of Christ as the 'new root of creation' and the 'new root of the reborn creation' (*NC*, II, p. 30, 32).

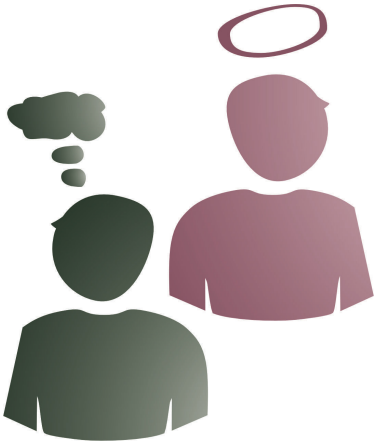
Dooyeweerd thinks that the Christian ground motive is free of any inherent tension. The reason for this lies in the view of reality as God's creation: God has laid his laws and norms into reality and therefore unity and order can be recognised in it. No part of the creation should therefore be elevated to absolute status at the expense of other parts. And just as importantly, there is no part of the creation that is structurally evil or inferior. The Fall shows that it is humanity itself that turned away from the divine order. Redemption opens a way back to that order and with it to the recognition of God's sovereignty. We shall come back to the claim that there is no inherent tension in the Christian ground motive in the 'Evaluation and critique' section.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC GROUND MOTIVE: NATURE AND GRACE

The third ground motive that Dooyeweerd distinguishes is the Roman Catholic, or scholastic, motive of 'nature and grace' (Figure 3.3). In his view, this ground motive is to be seen clearly in the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas, who tried to integrate Christian thought with that of the Greek past.

Central to Aquinas' thought (in Dooyeweerd's view) is the idea that God created reality in the duality of 'matter' and 'form'. Matter presents itself in the natural existence of human beings as the body and the rational soul. Form manifests itself in the supernatural ability to believe revealed truths, and to think and act in accordance with the Creator's intention. Natural Reason and faith therefore don't contradict each other: they go their separate ways in different spheres. Reason (a natural faculty) suffices for functioning in the realm of theoretical thought, but faith (a faculty imparted by grace) is needed for functioning in the realm of religion.

Dooyeweerd considers that the nature–grace ground motive also carries within itself an inherent tension. The two 'poles' are profoundly unconnected. A dualistic vision exists in which two elements are seen as absolute. The two poles will constantly compete for precedence – in contradiction to God's ordered work of creation.



NATURE | GRACE

Figure 3.3 Tension is present between the motifs of nature (left) and grace (right) because the integration of nature (pictured as thoughts produced by the brain) and grace (pictured as a halo) was not thought through. The two figures portray this tension in two ways; they look in different directions and grace has elevated one figure to a higher level (a hierarchical relationship). Faith (grace) builds on reason (nature) but in Dooyeweerd's view, the two are not sufficiently allied. ⏎

THE HUMANIST GROUND MOTIVE: NATURE AND FREEDOM

The last ground motive of the four is the humanist 'nature and freedom' motive (Figure 3.4) which has its origins in the Renaissance, when the 'rebirth' of humanity was proclaimed. Its goal was a 'new man', one who could grow in every respect into a 'universal', comprehensively cultured human being. In this movement, the centre of attention was more and more occupied by humankind. The idea that God, Bible or church has anything to say about humanity and its culture, art and science, politics and society was increasingly pushed aside.

The idea of the new man is trumpeted in Pico della Mirandola's book, *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (1496). We read in it how God tells Adam that he has been set at the centre of the world and that he may shape himself there as a free and sovereign artist. In other words, as a human being, you decide who you are, what you think and how you act. This 'new man' therefore strides across the natural world with a completely different attitude: he can curb the forces of nature and live in freedom on the 'playing field of nature'.

Dooyeweerd shows us another tension here, and in this ground motive it is between the poles of 'nature' and 'freedom'. At the 'nature' pole we see an environment whose threatening powers need controlling as much as possible. So, by way of science and technology, we can increasingly take nature into our grasp. Think, for

NATURE | FREEDOM

Figure 3.4 This illustration is inspired by the Statue of Liberty in New York. The crowned 'new man' of humanism holds a flaming torch aloft to symbolise his freedom. But the torch is at the same time also an axe, symbolising the technique that will be employed to take control of nature (the tree at the left side). What then appears is that nature turns upon humanity by becoming a dragon which robs the man of both his power and his freedom (the crown). ⏎

instance, of developments in medical science, agriculture and food technology. But mastery over reality can go so far that it becomes a threat to our freedom. We can provide a couple of examples.

The first example has to do with security in our towns and cities. CCTV cameras now look down on us in many places, and indeed they help the police to combat undesirable behaviour and increase the safety of citizens. But at the same time, those cameras create records of where people have been. Such records – especially in combination with 'big data' – can pose a threat to human freedom. After all, others are now able, uninvited, to take a peek into your life. In Dooyeweerd's view, humanism cannot resolve this tension between nature and freedom. That's because the humanist tradition sees freedom as unlimited. If such a boundless freedom is to be realised, unlimited control of our living environment is required. And, down that path, there is inevitably a curtailment of human liberty.

A second example concerns the use of fossil fuels. The freedom of citizens in the developed world is based on the extensive commitment of technology to extract fossil fuels and render them suitable for use. But this widespread use now appears to threaten the freedom of communities around the world through climate change.

In summary, Dooyeweerd concludes that the humanist motive, just like the Greek and the Roman Catholic ones, also has a dualistic character that leads to irreconcilable conflicts.

A LEVEL DEEPER

3.1 LUC FERRY'S THREE FAULT LINES

The French philosopher Luc Ferry offers a valuable variant of Dooyeweerd's doctrine of ground motives in his book, *Learning to Live: A User's Manual* (2021). Ferry, like Dooyeweerd (Chapter 1), asks fundamental questions about reality; about its diversity, coherence and unity; about human beings and the ethics of community; about meaning, salvation and redemption.

In order to understand the history of Western philosophy, Ferry confronts it with three questions. The first is about understanding the world we live in (theory). What does the world look like: is it hostile or friendly, harmonious or disorderly, secretive or understandable? And how can we acquire knowledge about that world? The second question concerns the desire for justice (ethics). How should we conduct ourselves justly toward others? The last question focuses on the search for salvation (wisdom). In what stories, beliefs, and traditions do we find wisdom, redemption, hope and meaning?

Ferry's research shows that Greek, Christian, modern and postmodern thinking offer fundamentally different answers to these three questions. The history of Western philosophy – and therefore the history of Western

GREEK THOUGHT

Figure 3.5 In this illustration the temple and the figures gathered before it represent the divine order in Stoic thinking. Free, male Greeks possess power (laurel wreaths) and others, like slaves, women and barbarians (the smaller figures), occupy lower stations in the hierarchy. ⏎

CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

Figure 3.6 The cross and the resurrection (empty tomb) of Jesus Christ lay the foundation for a new ethic. The law of love is central. There is equality of persons (figures of the same size), and humanity forms a unity (figures look towards and embrace one another). ⏎

culture – is characterised in consequence by three fault lines. The first fault line is the transition from Greek thought to Christian thought, the second from Christian to modern thought, and the third from modern to postmodern thought.

As far as Greek thought is concerned, Ferry focuses mainly on Stoicism (Figure 3.5). Stoicism teaches us to understand reality as a living organism. Each of its organs performs some beautiful function, is in the right place and collaborates harmoniously with the other organs. The Stoics call this impersonal, ordered structure the 'Divine' or the 'Logos'; it transcends humanity. In Stoic eyes this cosmic order is just and good. Therefore, everyone – freeman and slave, man and woman, Greek and barbarian – must accept his or her own station in the order. Ultimate wisdom is to be found in 'accepting' life as it is. Death, too, must be accepted. The ultimate human goal, salvation, is to be part of the divine cosmos.

The rise of Christianity marks a radical break with Greek thought. This comes into sharp focus in its thinking about reality. The divine is no longer equated with cosmic order: it takes the form of a person: Jesus Christ (Figure 3.6). In this context, Ferry refers to the prologue of the Gospel of John, which speaks of the Logos. The consequence is that the natural order is abandoned as the foundation for ethics and exchanged for 'the law of love', which regards all human beings as fundamentally equal. Anonymous, impersonal union with the cosmos makes way for individual redemption and a personal resurrection.

MODERN THOUGHT

Figure 3.7 In modern thought, there is personal equality (figures of the same size), and human reason is central (thoughts emerging from brains). Human reason develops the diverse fields of science and takes itself to be the foundation of the order in reality, the ethic of society and the salvation (redemption) of humankind. ⏎

The emergence of modern philosophy – the age of humanism – creates a second fault line in the history of Western culture. Whereas the Greeks and Christians still drew from a source outside themselves, modern thought disallows any source outside human wisdom (Figure 3.7). It rejects the idea of the Greek logos and questions the authority of God. The order in reality has no divine origin; it is imposed by us. It is a human construction. As for ethics, it is not based on the divine law of love, but on human reason. What is good must be good for all humankind. As for salvation, it no longer comes from 'above' and no longer extends to eternity. Men and women realise their salvation themselves, during their lifetime here and now, by means of technical mastery, law, science, art and economics.

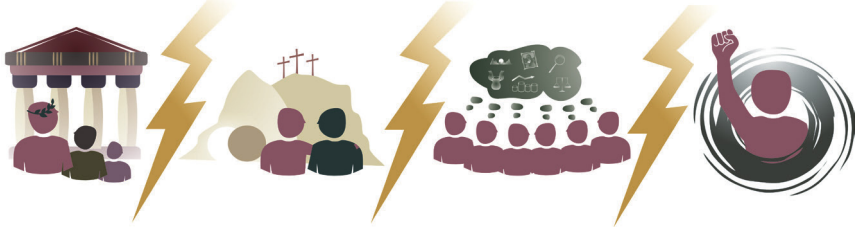
We now live in a time that is sometimes called late modern or postmodern. In Luc Ferry's view, you can describe postmodern thinking as a radicalisation of modern thinking (Figure 3.8). Whereas in modernity people still thought in terms of the whole of humanity, in postmodern thinking the focus is on individuals who fashion their own bodies, their lives, their ethics and their salvation. Ferry places the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche at the origin of postmodern thought. Nietzsche considered that modern thought still believed in values that are higher than life itself, values such as equality, freedom, solidarity and democracy. Nietzsche presents himself as the philosopher 'with the hammer' who wants to tear down all these modern values – 'idols' in his terminology – in order to create space for the individual human being. There is no order or harmony in reality, but

POSTMODERN THOUGHT

Figure 3.8 Self-conscious human beings shape their own lives in freedom (the fist is a symbol of power, protest and rebellion). Self-consciousness gives the strength to escape the forces and drives (grey bands) that attempt to determine their lives. ⏎

there is an infinite multitude of forces and drives that cannot be reduced to a unity and constantly clash with each other. In Nietzsche's ethics the creative power of the individual is to the fore in shaping his life freely for superiority. Nietzsche conceives of salvation in terms of an intense, exalted and red-blooded life; a life in which there is no room for regret and remorse; a life worth living over and over again.

Ferry chooses a rather different approach than Dooyeweerd to understanding the history of philosophy. This sometimes leads to the same and sometimes to different answers. Both approaches provide a clear picture



FERRY'S THREE FAULT-LINES

Figure 3.9 In Ferry's perspective, Greek, Christian, Modern and Postmodern thought provide four fundamentally different answers to the question of the order in reality, the ethics of society and the salvation and redemption of humankind. In other words, the history of Western philosophy is divided by fault lines. ⏎

of the history of Western philosophy: it is not a history of continuity but a history of radical breaks (Figure 3.9). And each rupture demonstrates its radical nature. Ferry's approach has great rhetorical power and adds the important consideration of postmodern thought. Dooyeweerd's approach shows that it is not only about starting points and principles, but also about motivation, passion and involvement. He also lays bare the internal tensions that so often inhabit traditions of thought.

EVALUATION AND CRITIQUE

The theory of ground motives remains attractive for a number of reasons. It opens our eyes to the worldview-ish or religious choices that underlie the different traditions of thought in Western culture. Moreover, it makes clear that people don't only make choices with the help of reason (starting points, principles, values) but also with the heart (inspiration, passion, involvement). In this way, Dooyeweerd does justice to the deeper layers of human existence, which are very decisive for our actions.

We recognise that the doctrine of the ground motives has been subjected to some necessary critique over the years. Does the theory do justice to the great variety of ideas and thinkers in the different periods? Aren't those ideas and thinkers squeezed into certain straitjackets? There is also criticism of the formulation of the different ground motives. More recent research, for example, has not confirmed the existence of an older nature religion and the emergence of a newer cultural religion in Greek history. The formulation of the Roman Catholic ground motive has been criticised from the Catholic side, and it has been argued that the similarities between Reformed and Catholic thought are greater than the differences. Even Dooyeweerd's claim that the Christian motive does not lead to tensions in philosophical thinking is open to criticism. After all, Christian philosophers are searching in their pursuit of truth, their paths sometimes lead to dead ends, and their thinking is darkened by sin.

Dooyeweerd's approach is abstract and not easily accessible. To make it easier to understand and to do justice to new insights in the field of philosophy, we have discussed the views of the French philosopher Luc Ferry on the history of Western culture and philosophy. Ferry's update has shown that the doctrine of ground motives is still relevant not only for philosophy and the sciences, but also for thinking about politics and society.

TODAY: THE NEW RIGHT – CONTEMPORARY POPULISM

Throughout the Western world, we see populist movements on the rise: in America for example, in Brazil, England, France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands. The New Right makes clever use of different social media to forge its unity of nationalists and 'angry white men', of antifragile men and antisemites, of antifeminists and racists. If you want to understand what drives the New Right, you have to probe their moral principles and fundamental premises, their vision of reality, morality and the future.

Supporters of the New Right believe that the world is in deep crisis. According to them, the crisis is caused by the current power-holding elites: the politicians, civil servants, scientists, journalists and artists. These elites have waged war on the social order where the white man used to be in charge by bowing the knee to feminism. They have given space to migrants from other cultures and are actively encouraging the 'repopulation' of 'white' countries. They are the cause of the many crises that plague the Western world.

New Right leaders believe that under their leadership, a new golden age will dawn. They see themselves as the new Messiah who will bring salvation and redeem society from its ills. They believe in a world order based on culturally homogeneous groups: for each race its own state. They think that some races are superior to others. In their new world order inequality between the sexes will be recognised and group interests will prevail over those of the individual.

The New Right can be characterised as 'anti-Enlightenment' or as a different modernity. In Luc Ferry's terminology it displays a radical break with Christian thought. It rejects the idea of a sovereign God. It despises the morality of Jesus Christ whose eyes rest upon the weak in society. It doesn't believe that the Kingdom of God comes 'from above'. Yet at the same time, it takes a different path than modernity did. It rejects the values of equality, freedom and solidarity. It wants nothing to do with democracy based on the rule of law. On the contrary, it propagates inequalities between the sexes and races. It searches for the strong leader who speaks 'for the people' and draws a new elite around himself.

With Dooyeweerd's prescience, we can point out that the new order advocated by the New Right is characterised by an enormous tension between control and freedom. In the end, the populist utopia can only be realised by force. That inevitably leads to a loss of freedom by all those citizens who do not belong to the new elite. Dooyeweerd would therefore say: anyone who declines to embed the motif of control within a framework of normativity advances the growth of inequality and loss of rights.

"AS SUNLIGHT BREAKS INTO A MARVELLOUS DIVERSITY OF RAINBOW HUES, AND AS ALL THESE PURE PASTEL COLOURS FIND UNION IN UNBROKEN, SHIMMERING WHITE, SO ALSO DO ALL TEMPORAL REALITY ASPECTS FIND THEIR SUPRA-TEMPORAL UNITY IN CHRIST JESUS, IN WHOM GOD HAS GIVEN US EVERYTHING.

HERMAN DOOYEWEERD (2013c, from now on: *CS*, p. 143)

4
ASPECTS

INTRO

Can complex questions about the world ever be whittled down to a single dimension or key perspective? Or is the world so many-sided that we must constantly remind ourselves of its many different facets? This question brings us to one of the gems of Dooyeweerd's philosophy: his theory of modal aspects. In this chapter we discuss the many-sided nature of reality and in the next we shall look at its coherence and unity. Diversity and unity are closely linked concepts in Dooyeweerd's philosophy (Figure 4.1).

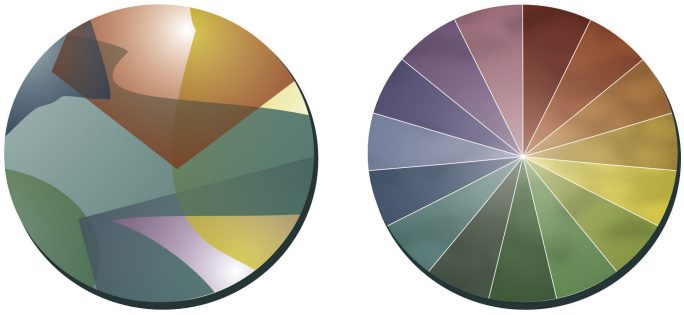


Figure 4.1 Dooyeweerd sees the diversity/multifaceted nature of reality and its unity/coherence as two sides of the same coin. You can't contemplate the diversity without taking the unity into account, and vice versa. ⏎

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PROBLEM: DOING JUSTICE TO A MANY-SIDED REALITY

Quite early in his career Herman Dooyeweerd began to take an interest in the relationship between the different branches of scholarship. It surprised him to find that his own field of legal research had imported many methods from other fields and was employing them. For example, some colleagues in the study of law developed an organic theory of law drawing on biology and its methods; others conducted psychological experiments in legal theory. And he wondered if that could be right. Don't the legal sciences have their own character and use their own vocabulary? Shouldn't they be invested in their own approaches? Dooyeweerd discovered a similar appropriation of methods from different disciplines in other sciences too. Were scholars not fully aware of the intrinsic character of their fields of study?

This was the problem he faced: how to develop a coherent view on the relation between different sciences? Behind this lurked another question: how can we do justice to the many-sidedness (or diversity) of reality? He wanted to know – in line with Calvin and Kuyper – what God's sovereignty meant for our thinking about these matters. In other words: when we think about what is specific to the various sciences, how can we do justice to the divine origin of reality? Has its many-sidedness also a divine origin?

CONTEXT: THE SPECIFIC NATURE OF THE DIFFERENT SCIENCES

On 8 April 1922 Dooyeweerd gave a lecture to the (Dutch) Association for the Philosophy of Law on the relationship between law and ethics. As far as we know, it was the first public lecture he gave. The meeting focused on the views of a Dr Gerben Scholten, who claimed that ethics is the basis and starting point for law. That proposition implies that legal norms are ultimately derived from norms in ethics. Dooyeweerd demurred. He underlined the difference between law and ethics. The two fields have their own systems of rules. In his opinion, both systems are 'sovereign'. That is to say, each has its own norms and its own authority. The system of law isn't subordinate to that of ethics, nor that of ethics to law.

Some years later, Dooyeweerd was asking similar questions about how law might relate to sociology, psychology and logic. He was confident that disciplines like log-

ic, law, ethics and physics have their own character and need to be clearly distinguished from each other. He also thought a clearer idea of the nature of scientific knowledge was needed. In Dooyeweerd's view, confusion among the scholarly disciplines was the result of 'inadequate philosophical training' and the consequent lack of 'proper discernment' (Verburg, 2015, p. 46).

Dooyeweerd doesn't elaborate in his 1922 lecture on the meaning of the word 'sovereign'. But he does so in a later lecture. He had meanwhile become the (first) director of the Abraham Kuyper Foundation, the research institute of the Anti-Revolutionary Party. In this later lecture (Dooyeweerd 2013c; from now on: *CS*, p. 143), he refers explicitly to the address that Kuyper had given at the opening of VU University of Amsterdam. Kuyper draws a sharp distinction there between the responsibilities of the university and the state. Sharp though that distinction may be, it doesn't end in divorce. Ultimately, all the spheres of life are accountable to the only one who exercises sovereignty: Jesus Christ. That is why, in Kuyper's phrase, 'there is not an inch in the whole terrain of this temporal life of which Christ does not say: "MINE!"'

All that pondering over such questions led Dooyeweerd eventually to the theory of modal aspects. 'Modal' refers to the Latin '*modus*', which means a 'way' or 'manner'. Dooyeweerd tells in his last interview in 1975 how the theory of modal aspects was born. On a warm summer's evening, during a stroll in the sand dunes near The Hague, he had a flash of inspiration about the congruence within reality. The insight dawned on him that the different ways in which we experience reality have a 'modal character'. What's more, the different 'modal aspects' must have some structure that allows their mutual coherence to be 'reflected'. We don't know much about this stroll. There are several indications that it took place in the summer of 1922 and that he was with his brother-in-law Dirk Vollenhoven. What we can be sure about is that in the spring of 1922, Dooyeweerd had given a lecture about these issues and that he also wrote a study in that period on 'normative legal theory'. It's clear that 1922 was a year when the theme of reality's many-sidedness was much on his mind. Later in this book the theory of modal aspects will often be simply called the theory of the aspects.

CORE: A DIVERSITY OF ASPECTS

Confrontation with other philosophers taught Dooyeweerd that he couldn't solve the problems we have mentioned (the origin and significance of reality's many facets) by using images, concepts and proposals that others had drafted. He needed to

develop a philosophy of his own if he were to do full justice to his religious insight. We summarised in Chapter 1 the most important points that Dooyeweerd's philosophy drew from Calvin's thinking. But right now, for the purposes of this chapter, these are the most important:

1 Reality does not rest in itself and does not exist in itself; it has its origin in God, is dependent on God and refers to God.
2 Everything that exists is created with its own nature. This explains the impressive diversity that confronts us. At the same time, it displays an ingenious and complex order and coherence.

Dooyeweerd proposes that when we look at reality through scientific spectacles, we will discover some fifteen different aspects. Each has its own character. They are closely connected and refer to each other. They are fifteen different ways of functioning, fifteen different ways of being.

If there is one thing Dooyeweerd does and wants to do with this theory, it is to erect a barrier against every form of reductionism. In his view, the different aspects cannot be reduced to one another. At the same time, he invites scholars to welcome the many-sidedness of reality and to pay attention to the coherence between the different fields of science. The emphasis on the distinction between the aspects goes, in other words, hand in hand with an encouragement to seek interdisciplinary understanding.

ELABORATION: THE THEORY OF ASPECTS

In October 1936 Dooyeweerd gave a lecture for a Christian youth organisation on 'The Christian Idea of the State'. He was trying to present his abstract philosophical reflections about modal aspects in an accessible way for young people who had never been taught any philosophy. History doesn't tell us whether that really worked. But we can certainly find in the lecture a nice summary of his thinking:

> In daily life we view a blossoming apple tree as a complete unity, an individual thing. For the various sciences however, this one thing can be considered from a particular point of view or in terms of a certain aspect. For mathematics only the aspects of numerality and space; for physics only the aspect of motion; for biology, organic life; for psychology only under the aspect of being a sense-object; [...] for linguistics as

> receiving a name; for economics as object of 'valuation'; sociology considers the tree as object in human social functioning; aesthetically a tree is considered only as an object of artistic harmony; jurally as an object of rights of ownership etc.; ethically as an object of love or hate; and theologically as an object of faith. (We believe that the tree is created by God and is not a fortuitous product of blind forces of nature.) (Dooyeweerd, *CS*, p. 142).

Dooyeweerd makes no distinction yet between the aspects of number and space or between the kinematic and physicochemical aspects. The description of the different aspects is also minimal. Later expositions bring forward all fifteen unique aspects (Figure 4.2, for icons see Figure 4.5).

In everyday life, we see a blossoming tree as a 'complete unity'. We don't feel the temptation to go and count its branches or blossoms. We don't concern ourselves with all the many biological processes that underlie the tree's coming into bloom. And we don't reflect on the precise legal rights of the owner of the tree. We don't ask ourselves why we should find an apple tree in bloom so beautiful. And no one thinks you can only find joy in an apple tree in bloom if you have first unravelled all its different aspects.

Figure 4.2 It is possible to distinguish fifteen different facets of any whole or 'entity' in reality. We shouldn't compare these aspects with pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that have to be fitted in their proper places if you are going to end up with a tree. The tree is just a single piece, but it is one that exists in fifteen different ways (modal aspects). Each aspect is represented by an icon (see Figures 4.4, 4.5). ⏎

Figure 4.3 In scientific analysis, scholars first establish their research object (the apple tree); they then 'enlarge' one aspect of the object (the economic, for example) and study that aspect in detail. To put that differently, if you look through the spectacles of economics (blue glasses), what you see is a blue tree. ⏎

Science, however, is not like that at all. In any scientific research, just one of the different aspects of the tree (one point of view) is usually allowed to be the key player. Only that one is subjected to objectification, abstraction and analysis (Chapter 2). Biology directs attention towards the processes that underlie the flowering of the tree and the growth of its fruit. Economics works out the economic value of apples and apple trees (Figure 4.3). It also maps out the importance of fruit cultivation for the local and national economy. Legal research takes an interest in property rights, in the need for felling permits and the problem of nuisance if the tree is on or near a property boundary.

So, how are everyday experience and scholarly analysis related to one another? In Dooyeweerd's opinion, they offer different perspectives on reality, different ways of making contact with it. The perspective of everyday experience takes precedence as the foundation for scientific knowledge (Chapter 2). We see that in this example of the tree as well. When we exclaim: 'Fantastic blossom!' it's the aesthetic aspect of the tree that catches the eye. If we say: 'It's great that the children can play under the trees', its social function arrests our attention. And if we ask if we may take home some flowering twigs, the juridical aspect has come into our minds. Yet in none of those cases do we abstract the relevant aspect for theoretical analysis. The aspects reveal themselves within everyday experience.

FIFTEEN DIFFERENT MODAL ASPECTS

Over time, as his terminology crystallised, Dooyeweerd's aspect theory acquired a settled form. He distinguished fifteen aspects (Figure 4.4), each one of them revealing something 'specific', a 'unique' quality. That peculiar quality he calls the 'meaning kernel' of an aspect. We shall now look at these fifteen aspects in Dooyeweerd's defined order and speak of them, with Dooyeweerd, as 'earlier' and 'later' aspects. He used those terms to prevent the order from being seen as a hierarchy of importance. We begin with the first aspect, the numerical or arithmetic, and end with the last, the faith or pistic aspect.

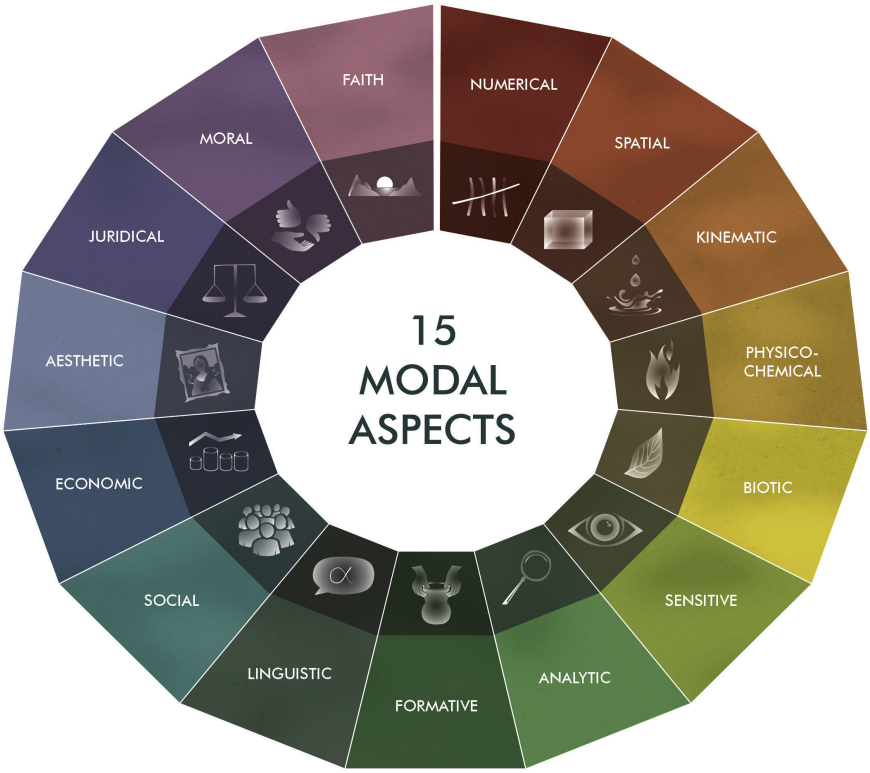

Figure 4.4 Dooyeweerd distinguished fifteen modal aspects. Each has a name and is represented here by an icon.

The numerical aspect. The first is the numerical or quantitative aspect. We focus on 'countability' as we look at this facet of reality. We might talk about the number of its branches or the amount of fruit or whether this tree's crop is above or below average. The core of the numerical aspect (what Dooyeweerd called its 'kernel') is 'quantity'. It deals with the question: how much/many?

The spatial aspect. Everything functions in a spatial manner. How far apart are apple trees planted? What shape do we want them to be? Where do we prune them to let light and air get to their branches, leaves and fruits? The shape of an apple helps us to know its variety. The meaning kernel of the spatial aspect is 'extension'.

The kinematic aspect. From this viewpoint we focus on motion. For example, there is sap flow within the limbs of an apple tree, the branches sway in a storm, leaves move in the wind and apples fall. Certain laws hold for all these movements. The core of the kinematic aspect is 'movement'.

The physicochemical aspect. From this fourth aspect, scientific study approaches all the physical and chemical processes in an apple tree. We can investigate the mechanical stability of the tree or the physicochemical processes that underlie the transport of water from the roots to the branches and leaves. The core of this aspect is 'energy' or 'interaction'.

The biotic aspect. This brings us to all the life processes that occur in an apple tree. Physical laws and chemical reactions play a major role in these processes but with the biotic aspect something more is added: it deals with processes such as growth, flowering and death. Cuttings 'take', grow roots and become new trees. Blossom forms in its season. Some apples are self-fertile; others need pollinators. The tree's metabolism, adaptation to environment, ageing and death are biotic features. The core of this aspect is usually described as 'life'.

The sensitive aspect. Dooyeweerd's choice of words alters as he moves on from the biotic aspect. He starts to describe the apple tree as something that humans (or animals) can sense. We perceive it in different ways: we see, smell, feel, taste and hear its reality. But this aspect also has to do with primary animal responses such as 'fight or flight'. Everything here revolves around the 'sensory' and 'emotional' meaning kernel.

The analytical aspect. This aspect concerns the human ability to analyse and make distinctions. The Swedish biologist Linnaeus devised a 'taxonomy' to classify organisms on the basis of shared characteristics. It works for fruit trees. So, the apple tree is a species (*Malus domestica*) in a genus (*Malus*) of small deciduous trees or shrubs of the rose family (*Rosaceae*). Analysis and differentiation place the demands of logic on

thinking. Dooyeweerd calls it the 'logical' aspect and its core is 'conscious reasoned discrimination'.

The formative aspect. The formative (or power) aspect lets us study the way in which wild apple trees were cultivated to produce varieties that bear fruit of different taste. The formative is always about a controlled way of shaping something. It's about human power and influence over minerals, plants, animals – and each other. Dooyeweerd also calls it the 'historical' aspect; he sees it in connection with culture, with moulding things under the influence of cultural change.

The linguistic aspect. The linguistic or symbolic aspect of the apple tree is seen in the names of trees. We talk about full or half-standard trees and varieties like the Jonathan, James Grieve and Elstar. The linguistic aspect includes symbolism: the apple tree stands for love, fecundity and immortality. And its fruit represents temptation (Genesis tells of Eve's seduction by the serpent to eat forbidden fruit). Road signs and national flags function characteristically in this aspect. The core of this aspect is described as signification or symbolic meaning.

The social aspect. The social aspect of (apple) trees can be seen in all kinds of ways. We invite friends to sit in the shade of our apple tree on a sunny afternoon (and take home some fruit). Town dwellers take initiatives to turn vacant spaces into communal gardens by planting trees. Cooks exchange recipes and gardeners 'show' their apples in competitions. Such examples are about 'togetherness', 'joining in' and being connected. This is expressed by the social aspect.

The economic aspect. An apple tree has an economic function when we buy it in a nursery or buy its fruit in the market. The scarcity of certain apple trees and apples raises their price. But the economic aspect isn't just about money. It also includes the responsible management of our time and goods. An orchard's soil must not suffer depletion. It should support biodiversity and enhance the landscape. This responsible management is nicely reflected in the description of the meaning kernel as 'stewardship'.

The aesthetic aspect. The aesthetic aspect of the apple tree was mentioned already. Apple trees, whether dressed in blossom, fruit or autumn colours, are seen everywhere as beautiful. The aesthetic aspect characterises even the 'ugliness' or 'strange beauty' of rotting fruit. The core of this aspect can be described as 'beauty' or 'harmony'.

The juridical aspect. The legal 'side' of an apple tree becomes obvious when we ask: 'Who owns it?' and 'Would the farmer let me pick apples?' It's about ownership and the rights and obligations it confers. It all turns on 'law' and 'justice'. The pervasive-

Figure 4.5 Each aspect is represented by an icon: keeping count (numerical); cube (spatial); falling drops (motion); flames (physicochemical); leaf (biotic); eye (sensitive); magnifying glass (analytic); potter's hands (formative); Greek *alpha* in a speech bubble (linguistic); small crowd (social); capital growth (economic); painting (aesthetic); scales (juridical); approving, disapproving and caring hand gestures (moral); sun beyond the horizon illuminating all the landscape (faith). ⏎

ness of those concepts comes into focus when we ask about the fair distribution of food.

The moral aspect. The moral aspect (the focus of ethics for Dooyeweerd) includes the grower's care and love for his or her fruit trees. That includes their pruning, fertilising, protection from pests and diseases, and the orchard's maintenance. This aspect opens up the moral considerations in the use of fertilisers, the application of pesticides and the loss of biodiversity. 'Love' and 'care' are the best words to describe the core of this aspect.

The faith aspect. The last aspect is the faith or pistical aspect (*pistis* is the Greek word for faith, faithfulness, trust). Humans have the capacity to believe (in God, a worldview, an ideology). We trust the aeroplanes and crews that fly us around. An apple tree can be an object in belief. Christians believe that reality is God's creation (apple trees too). Others believe there is no God and apple trees result from chance processes. Still others connect apple trees with Mother Earth (Gaia) and relate to them in that spirituality. Wherever it is directed, the pistic aspect is characterised by 'faith', 'trust' or 'final assurance'.

Dooyeweerd distinguishes in this way between the apple tree as an 'individual thing' and the different aspects as they appear to theoretical analysis. In our everyday experience of things, we can certainly differentiate these aspects but it's their coherence that predominates in our perception. Science discards that self-evident coherence as the scholar focuses on a single aspect (or the connection of aspects that defines a class of facts or events). This distinction is utterly foundational to Dooyeweerd's philosophy. You could even describe it as a breakthrough in thinking about reality.

SPHERE SOVEREIGNTY

Dooyeweerd emphasises the fact that these aspects are 'sovereign'. Their irreducibility, among other things, brings that to light. You can't reduce, or fully explain, the pistic aspect to (or by) the sensitive. No amount of biotic law conformity will present you with the logical aspect. And the biotic always brings something more into your view than physicochemical functioning can. The aspects cannot be reduced to one another because each has its own nature or character. Each is characterised by its own set or circle of laws or norms. Each is – in Dooyeweerd's terminology – 'embraced by its own law sphere' (Dooyeweerd, *CS*, p. 142). In Dooyeweerd's view, reality is therefore multi-aspectual. And this many-sidedness cannot be flattened out

to just one aspect or a couple of them. At the same time, as we shall see in the next chapter, these diverse aspects cling together in all kinds of ways. It is a tremendous challenge for the sciences to fathom their precise interlacements.

UNITY AND DIVERSITY

So then, what exactly is the relationship between the apple tree and all these different aspects? How do the different aspects relate to each other? In his 1936 lecture, where this chapter started, Dooyeweerd used the image of the rainbow to explain the relationship between the apple tree and its various aspects. In other texts he often uses the image of the prism (Figure 4.6). A rainbow exists because the 'white' sunlight is refracted by raindrops, causing the white light to fan out into a rich variety of colours. The colours are not independent things; they do not stand 'on their own' but find their unity in the unbroken light. We find the same thing when we do a modal analysis of the apple tree in more detail. In that modal analysis, our understanding of an apple tree fans out into all those different aspects. The aspects are not 'separately available'; they possess a unity in the apple tree itself. In the next chapter we shall discuss the different ways in which the aspects are related to one another.

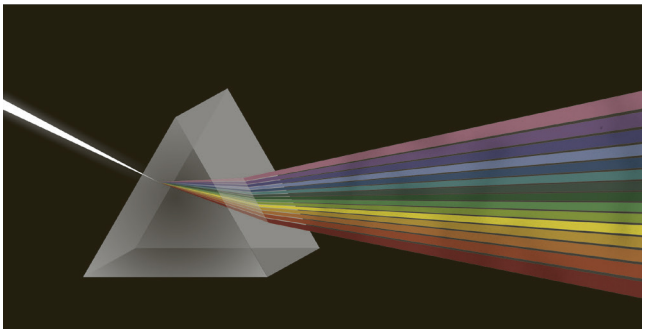

Figure 4.6 In theoretical analysis (the prism), the unity of reality (the white light) is broken up in such a way (the light fans out) that each aspect (each colour) can be researched and analysed separately. ⏎

EVALUATION AND CRITIQUE

The example of the blossoming apple tree shows how Dooyeweerd connects with everyday experience. He has tried to articulate what happens when scientists try to get to grips with the apple tree (or, rather, apple trees). Though they can be investigated along diverse scientific pathways, none of those pathways leads to the whole entity – 'the tree'. This gives to his approach an openness in principle. At the same time, Dooyeweerd was always convinced that further theoretical research would lead to modifications and corrections in the theory of modal aspects. The heart of his theory – the many-sidedness of reality – is nevertheless widely supported.

If we take a closer look at how it has been worked out, we can mention several adjustments that have been proposed. We come back to them in Chapter 11: 'After Dooyeweerd'. Willem Ouweneel argues that the sensitive aspect should be split into a perceptive, or sensory, aspect and a sensitive, or feeling, aspect. Perceiving is not the same as feeling, after all. Jan Dengerink inserts an aspect of purpose between the social and the economic aspects, and Calvin Seerveld identifies the meaning nucleus of the aesthetic aspect as allusiveness, locating it earlier in the series as a prelogical sphere between the sensitive and the analytic. There has also been much discussion about the formative aspect. Dooyeweerd gives it a broad cultural-historical significance, as we have mentioned. But, in agreement with the critique of Dirk Vollenhoven and others, we opt for a more limited meaning: about innovative creation. Finally, Bob Goudzwaard criticised Dooyeweerd's thesis that the economic aspect is characterised by scarcity. In his view, it is about 'careful management' and 'stewardship'. In our description of the economic aspect, we have followed the line of Goudzwaard.

TODAY: THINKING ABOUT FOOD AS AN EXAMPLE

We are always happy to talk about eating. There is lots to say about food and people have strong opinions about it. There are major differences in the ways food is prepared and eaten in diverse cultures and subcultures. That is why being invited to a meal with friends from another culture is so delightful. And going out to eat with your dearest, your family or friends, is such a pleasure. When you get down to talking about food, you find the series of aspects coming up again and again. Many restaurants stress that they source their foodstuffs locally (spatial aspect) and that they

are organically grown (biotic aspect). We comment on the flavour (sensitive aspect) and try to work out (analytic aspect) what herbs or spices were used. If we're lucky, the chef might tell us how the dish was cooked (formative aspect) and we can be amazed at the presentation on the plate (aesthetic aspect). We meet the faith aspect in 'formalities' like a prayer at the start or end of the meal when our sense of dependence upon God for our food is expressed. But in the culinary columns of magazines, we also discover that top chefs are regarded as gods in gastronomic culture!

When scholars investigate food systems, then the theory of the aspects elucidates their interest in so many irreducible features of nutrition from the orchard to the grocer's shop. Masses of research are carried out on the biological and economic aspects; on how to preserve foods and transport them. But what about the juridical aspect? Do our patterns of food consumption advance justice? Or do they foster global injustices? Why don't we question that as persistently as profitability? And what about the aesthetic aspect of our food? Why are apples and carrots only easily sold when they are uniform in size and shape and have the same colour? Have we eliminated the beauty and taste of 'wonky' fruit and vegetables? Doesn't that lead to huge waste? Finally, public debate mostly overlooks the deepest, the religious questions. The faith aspect prompts questions like: 'What are we relying on?', 'Have we replaced faith in God with faith in science and technology?', 'What basic visions of humans and nature have we bought into?' and 'Do we think at all about the intrinsic value of plants and animals?'

The theory of modal aspects shows its singular relevance in this example. It prompts us to look at problems or phenomena with new eyes.

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NO SINGLE ASPECT OF REALITY AND THUS NO SINGLE SPHERE OF TEMPORAL DIVINE ORDINANCES CAN BE CONSIDERED AS BEING INDEPENDENT FROM THE OTHERS OR PURELY BY ITSELF [...] THE *DEEPER UNITY* OF ALL TEMPORAL REALITY ASPECTS WITHIN THEIR OWN SPHERES OF DIVINE ORDINANCES (LAW-SPHERES) CANNOT BE FOUND IN ANY ONE OF THESE ASPECTS THEMSELVES. IT IS OF A *SUPRA-TEMPORAL, RELIGIOUS* CHARACTER.

HERMAN DOOYEWEERD

(CS, pp. 144, 143)

5
UNITY

INTRO

How do all those different aspects relate to one another? Are they connected? Can you get hold of them 'separately'? Or is there a certain 'unity'? In the last chapter we looked at the many-sidedness of reality. Dooyeweerd developed his philosophical view of that in the theory of modal aspects. Once again, we remind readers of the meaning of the word 'modal': it's about different ways or manners of existence – about 'how' things exist. In this chapter we shall look into the question of coherence and unity in reality. It's a fascinating question, precisely because each one of the aspects possesses a unique character and cannot be reduced to any other. In Dooyeweerd's philosophy, the concepts of diversity, coherence and unity are closely related (Figure 4.1).

PROBLEM: DOING JUSTICE TO UNITY

With his theory of modal aspects, Dooyeweerd wants to honour the way in which we experience reality. It's a multifaceted experience. When we translated it into philosophical terms, we found that fifteen different modal aspects could be distinguished. Yet, despite that, we experience reality as a unity. We have the feeling that all these different aspects are yoked together and interwoven in some way. And that brings us to the puzzle that Dooyeweerd now wants to solve: how are the different aspects connected? How can we explain their coherence philosophically? How is that unity to be put into words?

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CONTEXT: CONFRONTATION WITH OTHER THINKERS

The young Dooyeweerd was intellectually intrigued by the nature of the different scholarly disciplines. We saw it in Chapter 4 with the relation of law on the one hand to ethics, sociology, psychology and logic on the other. In the same period (1922) he wrote a study (*Normatieve rechtsleer*) on normative legal theory, though it was never published. It dealt with the ideas of the so-called neo-Kantians (A Level Deeper 5.1); a cohort of philosophers working in the tradition of the famous German scholar Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Dooyeweerd was probing the question: has the world we live in an existence independent of human thought? Whereas the neo-Kantians' answer was, 'No: it's the product of the human mind', Dooyeweerd's answer was, 'Yes: the world is founded in the creative action of God'. That 'yes' opened a new perspective for him on how we experience reality. In his research at that time, we already find the most important ingredients of what came to be called 'modal aspect theory'. And Dooyeweerd worked his vision of modal aspects out further in interrogating these thinkers. At the centre of the picture, he sees the mutual coherence and unity of all that exists. He discusses, among other things, the nature and order of the different aspects, the relationships between these aspects as they emerge in what he calls their anticipations and retrocipations, for example, and the distinction between laws and norms.

A LEVEL DEEPER

5.1 KANT AND NEO-KANTIANISM

Dooyeweerd often engages in discussion with the neo-Kantians, a varied company of German thinkers.

During Kant's lifetime, philosophy was dominated by two movements. The empiricists held that all knowledge is based on sensory experience, and the rationalists held, that knowledge is ultimately based on human thought. Kant tried to reconcile these positions by claiming that knowledge is always a product of both sensory experience *and* of the use of our mental faculties. In his view, sensory experiences only become meaningful when our reason starts to play with them. The mind does this in two ways.

First, it organises our sensory experiences under the 'forms of perception': space and time. Every experience is positioned by our minds here or there in space and now or then in time. Next, it organises our sensory experiences into 'categories' like substance and causality. Some sensory experiences assume a 'thing-like' character because we look at them through the lens of the substance category. Other experiences assume a 'causal' character because we use the lens of the causality category; for example, we see a causal relationship between a moving hammer and the nail that is driven into wood.

Kant's view implies that time and space are primarily properties of our reason and not of reality. And that also applies to substance and causality. This way of thinking has a great influence on how we interpret our experiences. They no longer belong to the external world, the 'real' world, the world of the thing-in-itself, Kant's '*Ding an sich*'; they belong to the world that presents itself to us in the raw material provided by our senses and is ordered by the thought forms of the human mind. For Kant, the thing-in-itself is unknowable. At most, we get a hint of it. But such a hint – or intuition – is, by definition, not a form of knowing.

Two schools of neo-Kantians are usually distinguished in the years following Kant's death: the Marburgers – thinkers like Herman Cohen, Paul Natorp and Ernst Cassirer – and the Baden school, including Wilhelm Windelband and Heinrich Rickert.

Dooyeweerd mainly engaged with the Marburg neo-Kantians. They took Kant's thinking further by rejecting all speculation about the *Ding an sich*. They also rejected any form of philosophical or religious intuition. In their view, no reality exists behind the sensorily perceptible reality. And the same applies to the 'I' or the '*ego*': we should not imagine that an 'I' sits behind everything that goes on in our mind. The 'I' or 'self' is no more than a sum of intellectual functions or abilities.

The Marburgers thus rejected any speculation about the *Ding as sich* or some other kind of reality behind reality – as in Hegel's philosophy for example. They rejected empiricism too, because the empiricists ignored the role of the mind in arriving at knowledge. Knowing is not a consequence of being; on the contrary, knowing constitutes (founds, or determines) being. 'Thought alone can determine what may be considered being' is an often-quoted statement of Herman Cohen. How might it do so? In

the Marburgers' view it can only be achieved by the rigorous application of mathematics and logic. Dooyeweerd will have nothing to do with this theory of knowing; it bears the imprint of logic all over it. His main work, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, doesn't bear that title for nothing. In people like Cohen, this mindset is fundamentally biased by its dependence on mathematics and logic.

CORE: UNITY IN REALITY

The confrontation with other thinkers persuaded Dooyeweerd to sharpen his own thinking and to develop a vocabulary of his own to put across his insight into the order and coherence of reality. Dooyeweerd also falls back on Calvin's thinking for this, and in particular on the point that reality is not self-supporting but finds its origin and direction in God. The order within reality is not imposed by human reason but given by God's creating activity.

The first important idea that Dooyeweerd elaborates on this point is that the unity of all the modal aspects cannot be traced back to any one of them. There isn't a 'super-aspect'. But then, neither can their unity be grasped from the total assemblage of aspects. In Dooyeweerd's vision, this unity has a deeper source and meaning. It has (once again) a religious origin.

The second important idea is that the order and coherence in reality can only be properly understood with the help of some rich new concepts. Here's the list: retrocipations and anticipations, sphere universality, founding and disclosing functions, object functions and subject functions. We will work these concepts out in this chapter.

ELABORATION: UNITY, COHERENCE AND DIVERSITY

In the last chapter we set out the fifteen different aspects in a specific order. We began with what Dooyeweerd calls 'earlier aspects' and followed with his 'later aspects'. We also pointed out that those different aspects cannot be reduced to one another. In other words, each aspect has something of its own that you do not find in any of the other aspects. This irreducibility is very fascinating, and not least because it immediately brings up the question: are they still connected? And, if so, how?

RELIGIOUS ORIGIN OF THE UNITY

In his 1936 lecture, 'The Christian Idea of the State' (see chapter 4), Dooyeweerd embarks on an intense discussion with Christian and humanist thinkers about the 'deeper unity' of reality. That is the term he uses in speaking about humankind, the order in reality, the structures of society and the modal aspects. The idea that reality in all its diversity is constituted as a unity cannot, according to Dooyeweerd, be proved by science or philosophy. In his view, the feeling or intuition that such a unity exists can only come from someone's worldview or religion. For Dooyeweerd this deeper unity is founded on reality's divine origin, on the sovereign will of God the Creator (Figure 5.1). He writes: 'The deeper unity of all temporal reality aspects [...] is of a supra-temporal, religious character' (*CS*, p. 143). There is no scientific or philosophical way, in other words, of calculating the deeper unity of the modal aspects rationally. It can only be discovered in a religious perspective. The quotation goes on: 'In Him [Christ Jesus] [...] all these aspects of temporal reality find their true fulfilment of meaning' (*CS*, p. 143). Dooyeweerd aligns himself here with New Testament assertions that all things were created in Christ and that all creation is renewed in Him (Colossians 1:16; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

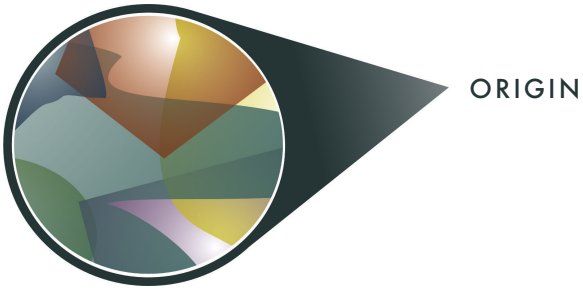


Figure 5.1 According to Dooyeweerd, the unity of (the circle around) the multi-coloured reality can only be based on a worldview. The 'origin' that lies behind it is what everything refers to, and what everything is an expression of. ⏎

In these quotations from Dooyeweerd, we should note that the deeper unity of the modal aspects is linked to 'the true fulfilment of their meaning'. He associates his thoughts about aspects and their deeper unity closely with the idea of 'meaning'. In Chapter 1 we used the concepts of 'expressing' and 'referring' in this context. Dooyeweerd would have us realise that these modal aspects all express who Christ is and they all refer to Him. When Dooyeweerd refers to God the Creator and to Christ Jesus in his lecture 'The Christian Idea of the State' – instead of using the more neutral, philosophical word 'origin' – we must read those statements as a confession of his faith.

ANALOGIES: ANTICIPATIONS AND RETROCIPATIONS

The connection between different aspects is also reflected in their so-called *analogies*. An analogy, as we know, is a figure of speech that explains the similarity between two different things, situations or events. Here is an example: 'The structure of an atom resembles the structure of the solar system. The nucleus is the sun, and the electrons are the planets revolving around the sun.' This analogy explains the structure of an atom by using our knowledge of the solar system. However, Dooyeweerd uses the word 'analogy' very specifically for similarities between pairs of modal aspects. It's about the way in which one aspect refers to others. An earlier aspect may refer to a later one or vice versa. We should say that the term 'analogy' reveals a structural relationship between two different aspects. Consider these two examples in which the biotic aspect refers to the economic aspect and the economic aspect refers to the biotic aspect (Figure 5.2).

Take this statement: 'We can increase the efficiency of photosynthesis in food crops by a factor of 1.5 or 2. That allows more food to be grown per hectare.' It relies on an analogy. Photosynthesis is one of the most important processes in plant physiology: sunlight converts water and CO_2 into sugars/foodstuffs. Photosynthesis therefore concerns the biotic aspect of a plant. 'Efficiency of photosynthesis' says something about that biotic process itself: the measure in which a plant uses sunlight in order to grow. But talk of 'efficiency' and the aim to increase yield refers to the economic aspect. So: from the earlier biotic aspect, reference is made to the later economic aspect.

As for the second example: saying that 'the industrial sector has contributed to Dutch economic growth,' works in the opposite direction. By 'growth' we think of living things that grow, like plants, trees and animals: growth is a concept from the

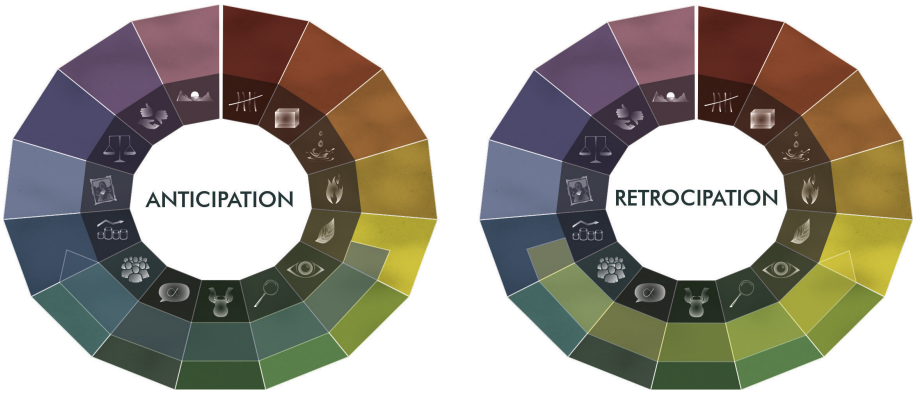


Figure 5.2 In the expression 'increasing the efficiency of photosynthesis in a crop', two aspects are juxtaposed: the biotic (photosynthesis) and the economic (efficiency). Their coming together occurs in a certain way: by anticipation or reaching forward. In this case, the (earlier) biotic aspect takes hold of the (later) economic aspect. This is depicted by the trajectory of the arrow: onward from the biotic to the economic. The expression 'growth of the Dutch economy' brings these same two aspects together again, but now by retrocipation. In this case, the aspect where 'the economy' is seated takes hold of the earlier aspect of growth. This is depicted by the trajectory of the arrow: backward from the economic to the biotic. ⏎

biotic aspect. But here, it's another analogy. When we speak about economic growth in the Netherlands, we refer to a phenomenon in the economic realm as if it were taking place in the earlier biotic aspect. And we can even make the analysis a little more subtle. If we choose to express the growth quantitatively ('by 5%' for example), then it's the numerical aspect we are referring to. What this example shows is that modal theory can not only clarify what we talk about but also demonstrate the complexity and layered structure of apparently simple concepts.

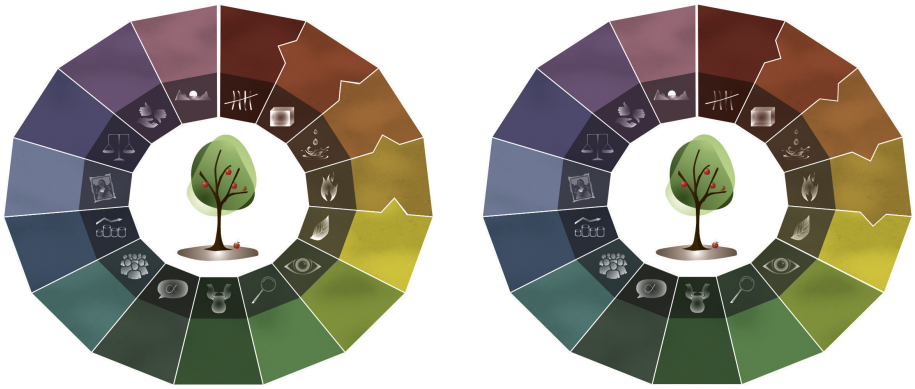
Now, when reference is made from an earlier aspect to a later one, Dooyeweerd calls it an *anticipation* (Figure 5.2). This compound word is based on the Latin words *ante* ('before') and *capere* ('to capture or grasp'); so, anticipating is taking hold of something that lies ahead. In the example of photosynthetic efficiency, we see an anticipation of the later economic aspect in the character of the earlier biotic aspect.

Reference from a later aspect to an earlier is called a *retrocipation* (Figure 5.2) by Dooyeweerd (Latin, *retro:* 'backwards'). In a retrocipation, we recognise an earlier aspect, but in the garb of a later aspect, as the example of economic growth showed. Everyday conversation makes use of myriad anticipations and retrocipations. When accountants say the accounts of a company are in handsome shape, they use an anticipation of the aesthetic aspect within the economic. When lawyers tell clients there is space (or even a loophole!) in some piece of legislation to open a claim, we have a retrocipation of the spatial aspect within the juridical. And if an entrepreneur uses his economic clout to enforce a high discount, then the economic aspect exhibits a retrocipation to the formative or power aspect.

SPHERE UNIVERSALITY

Dooyeweerd lays emphasis upon the deeper unity of the modal aspects, and he believes that the phenomenon of analogy is the key to expressing that unity philosophically. Close analysis shows that every individual aspect refers to all fourteen others via this system of anticipation and retrocipation. Dooyeweerd calls this fundamental phenomenon 'sphere universality'. We can picture each aspect as characterised by its own circle or collection of references to the others (its anticipations and retrocipations). Of course, the numerical aspect (the first) knows only anticipations and the faith aspect (the last) only retrocipations. The concept of 'sphere universality' is the counterpart (or reverse side) of sphere sovereignty. The latter emphasises each aspect's uniqueness (its own sphere of laws and norms), while the former emphasises its universality (its own sphere of analogies or references to other aspects).

The concept of sphere universality makes clear why so many scholars fall easily into the trap of reductionism. After all, each aspect reflects every other. It's therefore very tempting to try and reduce the whole multidimensional spectrum of reality to one of them. On that account, some physicists believe that all processes in our reality are ultimately nothing but physical processes. It also explains why some biologists regularly say that all higher human functions – such as rational thinking, enjoying art and believing in God – are nothing more than biological processes. It explains why economists may try to describe and understand all processes in society from the perspective of financial or economic gain. However tempting, this kind of reduction does no justice to our multi-aspectual reality as proclaimed by the concept of sphere sovereignty.



FOUNDATION DISCLOSURE

Figure 5.3 If we want to understand the relationship between the biotic, physicochemical, kinematic, spatial and numerical aspects, the direction of view is very important. If we dig down from the biotic aspect to the earlier four, the foundation comes progressively into view: the biotic aspect is made possible by the functioning of the apple tree in physicochemical, kinematic, spatial and numerical ways. The figure depicts this by the direction of the notches in the outer segments: in the left image they point from the later aspects to the earlier, foundational ones. When we look from the earlier foundational aspects towards the biotic, the phenomenon of disclosure is pictured: the physicochemical is deepened or disclosed under the influence of the biotic aspect, the kinematic is in turn disclosed by the physicochemical, and so on. Disclosure is depicted by the direction of the notches in the right image: they point from the earlier aspects to the later ones. ⏎

FOUNDATION AND DISCLOSURE

The deeper unity of reality surfaces also in the sequence of aspects. In principle, you can look at it in two ways: from the later aspects to the earlier and from the earlier to the later. We briefly discuss these concepts now using two specific examples but will return to them in detail later (Chapter 6).

An apple tree (like everything else) functions in all aspects (Chapter 4). But the biotic aspect has special significance; biotic activity is what makes a tree a tree. We acknowledge this by calling its biotic activity the qualifying function of a tree (Chapter 6). So, what is the relationship between the biotic aspect and the earlier aspects,

for a tree? Dooyeweerd's answer is this: functioning in the numerical, spatial, kinematic and physicochemical aspects makes the biotic functioning of an apple tree possible. Those modal aspects are foundational; these four aspects underpin the tree's biotic functioning (Figure 5.3, left). Similarly, when we look at the sensitive aspect of human and animal functioning, we find that it is founded in all five earlier aspects: the biotic, physicochemical, kinematic, spatial and numerical aspects.

Let's return to the apple tree and ask next what is going on as we look in the other direction, from the earlier aspects to the later? Dooyeweerd's answer is that the numerical, spatial, kinematic and physicochemical aspects are deepened or disclosed by biotic functions (Figure 5.3, right). Deepening or disclosure means in this case that biotic functioning shapes the physicochemical aspect of the tree in adaptive ways that are not found in non-living systems. But it goes further: the kinematic aspect must be shaped in such a way that the physicochemical processes can optimally support the biotic process. Something similar happens with the spatial and numerical aspects. Dooyeweerd calls this development process under the guidance of the biotic aspect 'disclosure'.

Disclosure occurs everywhere. A fine example is the disclosure or deepening of the linguistic aspect. This means that we can recognise juridical language, for example, or religious. The language that lawyers and judges speak has specialised vocabulary and characteristic expressions. The same is true of the language of preachers and pastors. Legal jargon was developed by disclosure or deepening so that conversation could take place about law, justice, guilt and innocence. The same applies to the language of faith, which makes it possible to speak about sin, forgiveness, hope and trust.

OBJECT FUNCTIONS AND SUBJECT FUNCTIONS

In Chapter 4 we illustrated the theory of aspects using a blossoming apple tree. But all aspects are aspects *of something* or *of someone*. They also refer to each other by anticipating or retrocipating. But here's the thing: within naïve experience, all the richly diverse ways in which that apple tree exists and enters our experience come together to constitute a single entity, a whole. In theoretical thought, we can account for that experience (a) by deploying a modality theory, and (b) by appealing to an intuition of unity that guides our sense of their coherence in the 'thing'. Now, by introducing the terms *subject* and *object* we can take another step into Dooyeweerd's exquisite account of reality. But this step is no longer about aspects of things but about

Figure 5.4 Everything in reality functions in all fifteen different aspects. But there's a difference in how that happens. The tree functions – without human interference – as a subject in the numerical up to and including the biotic aspect: the tree functions actively in those aspects. In the other, later aspects (from the sensitive up to and including the faith aspect), it can function as an object: the tree functions passively in those aspects. It is then an 'object of' attention and interference by humans – or possibly other animals. ⏎

real things themselves. We use the word things (entities) loosely here, not only for certain objects, but also for events and people. Something (a thing, an event) or someone may function as a subject in some way. Then it functions itself, actively. Or it can function as an object, that is to say, passively. In the latter case, the thing or the event is 'the object of' attention or interaction with something or someone else that takes the role of subject. Subjects therefore do something to objects.

The terms *subject function* and *object function* are derived from this. They relate to the aspects in which things function as subject or object. Subject functions thus relate to the aspects in which something is itself active. Object functions relate to the aspects in which something is passive, the object of attention or action taken by something or someone else.

Look again at the apple tree. In Dooyeweerd's terminology: the tree functions actively as a 'subject' in all aspects from the numerical up to and including the biotic (Figure 5.4). It has subject functions in them. After all, the tree manifests number in all its parts and it is this one tree (there are not two); it takes up space; it draws moisture from the earth and moves it through its limbs; its timbers are heavy and it consists of all kinds of physical materials; it grows, ages and dies.

From the sensitive to the faith aspect, the apple tree has only object functions. It is an 'object of interaction' with something or someone else. The pigeons come and eat its buds and young leaves (biotic object function); cats and dogs mark it with scent (sensitive); a gardener prunes it (formative); it was bought (economic) and it is greatly admired (aesthetic). In these actions and interactions, it functions as a biotic, sensitive, formative, economic and aesthetic 'object' respectively.

If we look at reality in this way, something of its versatility or many-sidedness, which we are always talking about here, becomes clear again. Non-living things like stones and rocks function as subjects only as far as the physicochemical aspect, plants and trees function as subjects in aspects up to and including the biotic (but 'sensitivity' appropriately describes their ability to respond to sunlight, gravity and the root systems of neighbouring plants). Higher animals function up to and including the sensitive aspect as subjects (but with increasing evidence of functioning that can be called analytic, lingual and social). And humans? Humans function in all aspects as subjects.

The distinction between subject functions and object functions is very fruitful, for example, in describing the differences between humans and technical aids. Take garden tools, for example. Humans and garden tools both function in the same way in the physical aspect. After all, all the laws of physics apply to both gardeners and their tools. Think, for example, of gravity and of electrical current. But if we look at the economic aspect, we see a big difference. In this aspect, humans function as subjects: humans buy and sell services and products, whereas garden tools function as objects: they are bought or sold. The same applies, for example, to the moral aspect. In this aspect, humans function as subjects: they act in morally accountable ways in given situations. Garden tools function as objects in this aspect. A human can use garden tools in a responsible way to prune a tree or a shrub but can also use them in a morally irresponsible manner by injuring someone else with them.

Thinking in terms of subject functions and object functions becomes very lively when we think about artificial intelligence. If 'intelligent' computers are used to buy or sell shares on the stock exchange, can you still maintain that computers function

only as objects in the economic aspect while it's humans that function as subjects? If expert systems are employed in healthcare to read X-rays and provide advice on treatments, can you still maintain that only humans bear moral responsibility and expert systems do not? Dooyeweerd would, we think, still defend the proposition that intelligent computers and expert systems function there as objects. But he would emphasise and attempt to analyse the complex interlacement of interactions between people, computers and expert systems.

EVALUATION AND CRITIQUE

Dooyeweerd's vision of the deeper unity of modal aspects is widely appreciated in its broad outline. First, because it does justice to our own experience. All the different modal aspects influence each other and are somehow connected. Second, because it explains diverse phenomena in reality. Just think of the different examples we have given of anticipations and retrocipations, sphere universality, and foundation and disclosure.

TODAY: THE DEEPER UNITY OF SPECIES?

Dooyeweerd understands the deeper unity of the aspects of reality as a boundary problem. This means that as you try to wrap your thinking around that deeper unity, the answer keeps eluding you. You run up against some boundary or other and your thinking can't climb over it. What you can do is: draw on your intuition. Intuitions are shaped by personal experiences, education and beliefs, including religious beliefs. Boundary problems therefore always raise questions and often lead to major differences of opinion between philosophers. We will give one example.

The concept of 'species' plays an important role in biology. The question is: how can we understand the deeper unity of the different biological species? Has every species an identity of its own, and are species therefore immutable? Or have species ultimately no fixed nature and can they evolve? Dooyeweerd (1959, p. 146) tried to clarify this boundary problem in biology by drawing on his Christian faith. He wrote that the different biological species are grounded in the creative action of God. Each species is, so to speak, an expression of the order that God has placed in creation. And therefore, species have their own identity and are unchangeable.

Jacob Klapwijk, also a Christian philosopher, wants to correct this view. He thinks that Dooyeweerd hasn't made it at all plausible that the difference among biological species reflects the order that God has established in creation. He believes that scientific research has now convincingly demonstrated that 'species are patterns of relative durability but without a fixed identity' (Klapwijk, 2009, p. 245). This discussion is typical of our thinking about boundary problems. The question is always: how far can your thinking go? or: can a given religious interpretation withstand the test of criticism? or: are you doing justice to the scientific discipline involved? But this question also points us to Dooyeweerd's theorising about the nature and types of things – which is the subject of our next chapter.

"WE MUST THEREFORE RESUME THE DISCUSSION OF THE PROBLEM: WHAT PROCEDURE MUST BE FOLLOWED TO GAIN THE DESIRED THEORETICAL ACCESS TO THE STRUCTURE OF THINGS IN THE NAÏVE EXPERIENCE? SINCE THIS ACCESS CANNOT BE ACQUIRED WITHOUT THEORETICAL ANALYSIS, WE MUST OBVIOUSLY SEEK A POINT OF CONTACT IN THE THEORY OF MODAL SPHERES.

HERMAN DOOYEWEERD
(*NC*, III, p. 54)

6
THINGS

INTRO

Just picture the immense diversity that exists around us! So many things: trees, beaver dams, houses, paintings, tables, chairs, robots; you name it!

Philosophers use the word 'thing' for whatever is a whole and possesses some identity of its own. It's true of living creatures, too. All possess something 'specific' of their own. A tree is not a beaver dam, a house isn't a painting, nor is a table a chair. So, can we theoretically analyse and understand that 'specific'? And if so, what is the best way to get at it? Dooyeweerd has no doubts: yes, the 'own-ness' of things can be understood, but only if we link it with the theory of modal aspects. And that is why we must introduce some new concepts in this chapter.

PROBLEM: INSIGHT INTO THE PRINCIPLES OR LAWS FOR THINGS

In the previous chapters we already paid attention to 'The Christian Idea of the State' – Dooyeweerd's lecture for a Christian political youth organisation in October 1936. In it he discussed at length the question of how reality is put together. With deep respect and whole-hearted approval, he points to Calvin and Kuyper in their vigorous insistence on seeing reality as created by God. What attracted his interest and enhanced his respect and approval was above all their focus on the idea of a God-given order. This order sustains not only the physical world but also our cultural reality. Every societal relationship, whether it is the church, the state or the family, has received 'from God its own structure and law of life' (CS, p. 128). Abraham Kuyper had coined the expression 'sphere sovereignty' for that order.

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Dooyeweerd systematically elaborates Kuyper's idea about sphere sovereignty in his lecture. The idea has two meanings. The first concerns 'the rich diversity of aspects manifest in temporal reality' (*CS*, p. 142) that we examined in the previous chapters. The second meaning concerns 'insight into structural principles' of things and societal relationships (*CS*, p. 145). It brings us to the problem that Dooyeweerd wanted to solve: how does sphere sovereignty come to light in things like trees, beaver dams, houses, paintings, tables and chairs, and in societal relationships like church, state and family? He wants to get hold of the 'structural principles' or 'structural laws' that apply to these things and relationships. In his view, they are structures given by God. He uses, therefore, the expression 'concrete, divine structural principles' (*CS*, p. 145). Dooyeweerd observes that those structural principles are seen in the peculiar ways in which the various modal aspects are ordered in things and relationships. We can distinguish between things or between relationship on the basis of the configuration of aspects. And so, in describing the structural principles of concrete things and societal forms, he closely follows the theory of modal aspects. In this chapter, we will confine our interest to the theory of things. In the next we will focus on the theory of social relationships.

CONTEXT: THINGS AS PRODUCTS OF OUR THINKING?

Dooyeweerd writes that in philosophy – so far as he knows – no theoretical research was ever done into the (modal) structure of the different things that occur in reality. He does refer, however, to an important exception, i.e. a treatise by the phenomenologist Max Scheler (1874-1928) (*NC*, III, p. 53). Phenomenology is a philosophical movement that describes phenomena as they present themselves to us by letting them speak for themselves. Dooyeweerd notes with pleasure that Scheler and he are fighting the same battle on two important points. First: things should not be seen as the product of our theoretical thinking. Dooyeweerd is not only thinking of Immanuel Kant's philosophy (A Level Deeper 5.1) but of a much older tradition of thought also, in which things are seen as (the expressions of) 'substances' (Chapter 1). Then Dooyeweerd, like Scheler, believes that we must pay proper attention to the unique character of naïve experience on the one hand and of theoretical thinking on the other (Chapter 2). In other words, we should not treat naïve experience as if it were theory. In everyday experience we experience things as things, as unique wholes.

All the same, Dooyeweerd judges that Scheler reveals no further insight into the structure of things. As he sees it, he does no more than offer an impressionistic im-

age of how we know the world around us. In fact, Dooyeweerd believes that Scheler can't get a clear insight into the structure of things because he hasn't adequately accounted for the religious basis of his thinking (Chapter 3).

CORE: A DIVERSITY OF THINGS

Dooyeweerd wants to understand the structure of things for himself. He isn't able to, and doesn't want to, fall back on the work of other philosophers. And besides, he wants to develop a theory of things that accords with the principle of sphere sovereignty. He believes that to be the only way he can honour the conviction that God is the Creator of all that exists and that everything is created with a nature of its own (Chapter 1). This 'own nature' relates somehow to the God-given structure. How to fathom, interpret and describe this nature and structure is a challenge for philosophy.

To meet the challenge, Dooyeweerd takes the theory of modal aspects as a starting point. He proposes that every concrete thing – a tree, beaver dam, house, painting, table, chair or robot: whatever – functions in all the fifteen aspects of reality he has identified. But it turns out on closer inspection that these aspects are 'grouped' differently for different kinds of things (*CS*, p. 146). One of the first differences exists in the grouping of subject and object functions (Chapter 5). Think, for example, of the strikingly different grouping of subject and object functions in stones, trees and people. Another difference attaches to the so-called qualifying function of things. We examine this later in the present chapter but, for present purposes, bear in mind that a shrub or a tree is *qualified* by the biotic function and a painting or sculpture by the aesthetic function. A third difference is evident between natural things and cultural things; also discussed later in this chapter, but provisionally: stones and trees occur in nature whereas paintings and houses are the product of human hands.

The theory of things – like that of modal aspects – is a dam; it holds back all kinds of reductionism. We can't reduce the great diversity of things to just a few kinds or types. That works neither in nature nor in culture. Close inspection shows that 'identity' – i.e. the identity of kinds, classes, or things – is a complex concept. What is more, when you carry out that close inspection, you will meet one surprise after another. The myriad 'things' of experience exhibit extraordinarily complex structures. Grasping anything of that complexity, will increase one's amazement about the diversity and coherence of things, both in nature and in culture.

A LEVEL DEEPER

6.1 NUMERICAL AND SPECIFIC IDENTITY

The question of what a thing 'is' diverges in philosophy into a number of sub-topics, every one of them a philosophical minefield. What we are principally considering here is the identity of things – also a many-branched and tricky subject. What occurs when we identify something as a 'thing'? Identity may refer to 'just this one individual entity', but it can also mean 'what qualifies it as an exemplar of a kind or species'. When identity refers to the uniqueness of 'this one example', philosophy speaks of *numerical identity*. When it refers to 'being an example of a species', it speaks of *qualitative* or *specific* identity. Numerical identity therefore concerns this one, unique apple tree; specific identity concerns its being an apple tree and not a pear tree.

Dooyeweerd's aspectual, or modal, analysis concerns properties of things. Those properties concern the *qualitative* or *specific* identity. The richness of his conception comes to expression in his systematic philosophy, where he introduces interesting refinements by distinguishing between anticipations and retrocipations, subject and object functions, and qualifying and foundational functions. So far, qualitative identity.

Dooyeweerd seems to have a harder time with numerical identity. He says little about it and what he does say is mainly directed against what others have said. The nub of his remarks about Aristotle, Leibniz and Kant, for example, is that their views are all based on a thinking that takes itself to be absolute, the ultimate ground. They make unique identity a theoretical concept. We could paraphrase Dooyeweerd's view like this: he distinguishes the *experience* of (unique) identity from the technical-philosophical *concept* of (numerical) identity. Philosophers have always tended to equate these two, thereby reducing unique identity (everyday experience) to a formal, theoretical and almost empty concept of identity (scientific analysis). Dooyeweerd opposes this reduction. The experience of uniqueness has something both encompassing and incomprehensible about it, not because it is mysterious but because it is a given. Uniqueness is a riddle for philosophers and scientists, because it cannot be defined in general terms; but for every layman it is completely self-evident.

ELABORATION: THE THEORY OF THINGS

DIFFERENT GROUPINGS OF FUNCTIONS

In Chapters 4 and 5 we traced Dooyeweerd's analysis of a blossoming apple tree. We saw apple trees functioning in all aspects, but with some differences. In the first five aspects, from the numerical to the biotic, an apple tree functions as a subject, actively. In the next ten aspects, from the sensitive to the pistic, an apple tree functions only as an object, passively. That means it is the object of some or other activity on the part of other plants, animals and humans.

If we compare a blossoming apple tree with a stone or an animal, the difference in the grouping of modal aspects is immediately obvious. Stones function as subjects in the first four aspects and as objects in the next eleven. An animal functions in the first six aspects as a subject and in the following nine as an object.

The conclusion is this: to gain more insight into the structure of things, you have to look at the grouping of the different aspects.

QUALIFYING FUNCTION: APPLE TREES

So, let's compare a tree with a stone. Each of them functions in the first four aspects as a subject, that is to say, actively, in itself. But in the biotic aspect, the tree functions as a subject and the stone only as an object (some living thing makes use of it). And for all the later aspects, both trees and stones must function as objects. That biotic aspect therefore makes a big difference: trees live, stones don't. Apple trees blossom, stones never do. Apples come from trees and never from stones. Apple trees are what they are in virtue of their particular biotic functions. Philosophically speaking: the biotic aspect is the qualifying function of a tree (Figure 6.1).

But there's more we must add. We just wrote that trees and stones function as subjects in the first four aspects. But when we go on to look at the tree's functions in the numerical, spatial, kinematic and physicochemical aspects, they aren't the same as the stone's. Take the spatial aspect: the shape of a tree is such that its leaves can capture as much sunlight as possible in order to convert water and CO_2 into sugars. The spatial aspect has been guided to support the tree's energy requirements and structure maximally. Nothing like that obtains between the stone's spatial and other aspects.

Take the kinematic aspect; we see major differences again. When a stone expands and contracts on sunny or frosty days, that happens at a certain speed and in some

Figure 6.1 What makes a tree a tree? What distinguishes a tree from, for example, a stone? The biotic aspect. That aspect qualifies an apple tree (shown by the arrow and background colour). It also happens to be the last aspect in which the apple tree functions as a subject (shown by the light outer ring). ⏎

instances, under the influence of heat and cold, cracks appear in the stone and propagate at a certain speed. But trees function very differently in kinematic terms. Sap can flow with different seasonal speeds and boughs sway in the wind. They would otherwise break more readily. In short, the tree's kinematic side appears to be ordered in such a way that it can actually be a living tree.

Finally, the physicochemical aspect. Most stones consist of oxides and/or carbonates of silicon, sodium, calcium, potassium, magnesium, aluminium and iron. The physicochemical structure of trees is much more intricate. The chemical structures are particularly complicated, and many (bio)chemical reactions take place. Photosynthesis is only one of them. Everything in this aspect is aimed at making the biotic life of trees possible. In the terminology of Chapter 4: the numerical, spatial, kinematic and physicochemical aspects are foundational for the biotic aspect of a tree, while conversely, the biotic aspect discloses and deepens the numerical, spatial, kinematic and physicochemical aspects.

Our analysis shows that in a tree the biotic aspect fulfils a particular role. Dooyeweerd calls this role the qualifying function of the tree. 'Qualifying' means: what makes a tree (specifically) a tree and distinguishes it from a stone or an animal. If we analyse stones and animals in the same way, we find that the qualifying function of a stone is the physicochemical aspect, and the qualifying function of an animal is the sensitive (psychic) aspect.

QUALIFYING FUNCTION: BEAVER DAMS

Beaver dams are fascinating. Beavers are known for their ability to cut down trees, 'saw' them into pieces and drag them to the dam's construction site. The dam is made of pieces of wood, stones and mud. Beaver dams can be tens and even hundreds of metres long and rise one or even several metres above water level. Such dams create ponds behind them. That is where the beavers will build a 'lodge' of similar materials, leaving open an underwater entrance. The lodge is a safe place for the beavers to store their food, sleep, raise their young, keep warm in winter and hide from predators.

How might we describe such a beaver dam with all its lodges in philosophical terms? What determines its identity? A beaver dam consists predominantly of non-living materials, all of which function as subjects in the arithmetic, spatial, kinematic and physicochemical aspect. But here they have become objects in the biotic and sensitive life story of the beaver. So, what is the qualifying function of a beaver dam? To answer that we have to look closely at how the dam and the lodges work: they are dedicated to the life and survival of these animals. The qualifying function of a beaver dam is therefore the sensitive aspect (Figure 6.2). All the earlier aspects (numerical, spatial, kinematic and physicochemical) of the materials used are disclosed (Chapter 5), under the guidance of the sensitive aspect. The qualifying aspect of a beaver dam is therefore an aspect in which the dam and all those components

QUALIFYING FUNCTION
of BEAVER DAM

Figure 6.2 A beaver dam consists of wood, stones and mud. The dam is built to enable beavers to live and raise their kits. The qualifying function of a beaver dam is therefore the sensitive aspect (shown by the arrow and background colour). ⏎

function as objects. Not so for the living tree: its qualifying function is an aspect in which the tree functions as a subject.

In nature, we find many phenomena that are comparable to beaver dams. Think, for example, of turtle shells, ant nests and honeycombs. In all these cases, the qualifying function lies in the sensitive aspect, even while they function as objects in that aspect.

FOUNDING FUNCTION: HOUSES

What's the difference between a primitive cave dwelling and a house made of sandstone or limestone? Caves are usually found in limestone. Over hundreds or thousands of years, the groundwater dissolves parts of the limestone, which opens up space. If it's big enough, the space can be used as a dwelling. The cave dwelling is therefore a 'natural thing', the result of natural processes. A house built of limestone, on the other hand, is an artefact; it results from human effort. People have

FOUNDING FUNCTION CAVE DWELLING: PHYSICOCHEMICAL

FOUNDING FUNCTION HOUSE: FORMATIVE

Figure 6.3 How are houses created? There is a big difference between a cave dwelling and a stone-built house. The cave is the result of natural processes. In Dooyeweerd's terminology: its foundational function is the physicochemical aspect (dark yellow foundation). A house built from stone is the result of human labour. That is why its foundational function is the formative aspect (green foundation). ⏎

hewn stones and built a house with them. A house made of stone is therefore a 'cultural thing', the product of human formative labour. To indicate the difference between a natural thing and a cultural thing, Dooyeweerd introduces the term 'founding function' (Figure 6.3). The founding function describes the aspect that most directly underlies the existence of a thing. A cave is the result of natural processes; its founding aspect is therefore the physicochemical aspect. A house is the result of human action; its foundational aspect is the formative aspect.

The concept of a founding function makes us sensitive to all sorts of change in culture. Think of food, for example. Traditional hunter-gatherers obtained their food directly from nature. The ingredients of their diet are therefore biotically founded. With the modern food industry, it is very different. Many of our foodstuffs are processed to some degree. The founding aspect of these foodstuffs is the formative aspect.

QUALIFYING AND FOUNDATIONAL FUNCTION: PAINTINGS, COURTS AND HOSPITALS

Paintings consist of 'non-living materials': paint and linen. They are created by people and their founding aspect is therefore the formative aspect. But what makes a painting a 'painting'? Paintings are works of art. We look at them to be moved by them. Their qualifying function is the aesthetic aspect. In this case – just like the beaver dam – they have a qualifying function in an aspect in which the painting functions as an object.

Look at two more examples of cultural objects: a law court and a hospital. Each is built from basic materials like stone, iron and glass. But the court is designed so that judges can administer justice properly and the hospital so that doctors and nurses can provide optimal care to patients. The founding function of both law court and hospital is the formative aspect: they are built by people. But their qualifying functions differ: the legal and ethical aspect, respectively.

WHOLE-PART RELATIONS: SIMPLE ROBOTS

We can dig down another spit. Let's take a simple robot as an example. It is installed on a conveyor belt to place one part of some product on top of another. The qualifying function of a robot is the formative aspect: robots carry out technical processes in a controlled manner. A robot consists of modules and modules consist of parts.

WHOLE-PART RELATION:
ROBOT and ROBOT ARM

Figure 6.4 Dooyeweerd describes the relationship between a robot and its modules and between a module and its parts with the term 'whole-part relationship'. Such a relationship exists when the whole (the robot) determines how the parts (module, components, here: robot arm) should function. Robot, modules and components are also qualified by the same modal aspect: the formative aspect. ⏎

What are the qualifying functions of the modules and the parts? And how can we understand the relationship between robots, modules and parts?

All modules of a robot are designed so that the robot can perform desired actions. The parts are also designed and put together in such a way that the module in question can perform its function well. Therefore, modules and their parts can only be understood from the perspective of the robot as a whole. Consequently, their qualifying function is the same as that of the robot, namely the formative aspect. For constructions like these, Dooyeweerd coined the term 'whole-part relationship' (Figure 6.4). The reason is that the whole (the robot) determines how the parts (modules, parts) should be designed. The qualifying function of the whole (robot) also determines the qualifying function of the parts (modules, parts).

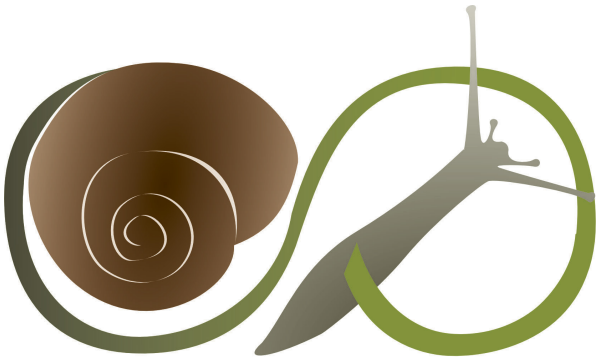
ENKAPTIC INTERLACEMENT: INTERLACED STRUCTURES

Then, what about the relationship between a snail and its shell? Is that a whole-part relationship, too? Dooyeweerd points out that the non-living shell and the snail body have different structures even though both are qualified by their function in the same, sensitive, aspect. After all, in the sensitive aspect, the snail functions as subject and the shell as object. In other words, two different structures (the shell and the snail body) are interlaced in a single whole. We call the whole thing a snail.

The snail exists as an enkaptic interlacement that has adopted the structure of an enkaptic subject-object relationship (Figure 6.5). You find comparable interlacements with shellfish and turtles.

Another kind of interlacement can be seen in connection with a marble statue. The qualifying function of the unprocessed marble is physicochemical but that of the statue is aesthetic. The interweaving is so deep and intrinsic that a new whole is created: an enkaptic structural whole (more on this in Chapter 10).

Yet another kind of interlacement can be found in ecosystems in which soil, water, plants and animals are enkaptically interwoven with each other. In this interlacement the different things keep their own qualifying functions: a stone remains a stone, a plant a plant, and an animal an animal. All these things are interwoven without a new structure being created.



ENKAPTIC INTERLACEMENT
SNAIL and SHELL

Figure 6.5 This animal consists of two different structures (a shell; a snail body) that are intertwined (the encircling 'S'-shaped ribbon). It is characteristic of an enkaptic interlacement that the intertwined structures remain relatively independent. The snail and its 'house' are both qualified by the sensitive aspect. That's a subject function for the snail (body) and an object function for the 'house'. In this figure, the sensitive subject function is represented in a light green colour and the sensitive object function in a darker shade of green. ⏎

EVALUATION AND CRITIQUE

The theory of thing structures provides handles that can help us grasp the structures of things. Concepts such as qualifying and founding functions are particularly helpful. With them, we can understand and describe the difference between things like stones, plants, bicycles, law courts, art museums and churches. It is also important to distinguish between whole-part relationships and enkaptic interlacements. These concepts provide a deeper insight into the relationships between things.

In practice, it is not always easy to apply this system convincingly. Van Woudenberg (1992) observes that Dooyeweerd's search for the qualifying function of works of art yields a more appealing result than that for the qualifying function of tables and chairs. The qualifying function of domestic tables and chairs is the social aspect. But does this aspect help us to understand why the furniture in the living room is designed differently from that of the dining room?

Verkerk and others have proposed that we understand the structure of things partly from the context in which things function. A chair in the living room is designed to enable one to sit comfortably and chat pleasantly with other people. The qualifying function is the social aspect. But what about the chair you occupy at the dentist's? The dentist's chair is designed in such a way that it can provide dental care. In other words, the qualifying function of a dentist's chair is the moral aspect: it is about patient care.

TODAY: THE ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE FUTURE

The theory of things is particularly fruitful for thinking through all kinds of societal developments. Take, for example, the development of the energy infrastructure of the future, which is expected to be even more complex than it is today. In the past, we had various energy systems that existed relatively independently of each other (coal, oil, gas, electricity). The electricity grid was simple: electricity was generated centrally and then distributed to all the customers. This is now changing rapidly: much electricity is generated locally (particularly solar energy), partly used locally and partly fed back into the grid. Smart grids are used to try to manage supply and demand optimally. It's expected that a parallel hydrogen infrastructure will be developed. The demand for energy storage is becoming ever more urgent, especially

for the surplus electricity we gain when the sun shines but use when the sun doesn't shine, or the wind doesn't blow for several days.

When we analyse the technical infrastructure, we find that it has many substructures. The electricity infrastructure has, among other things, substructures that generate, transmit and distribute electricity. Then, each of these appears in turn to consist of other substructures. All these relationships can be understood in terms of whole-part relationships.

The energy infrastructure of the future will not only consist of technical structures for generating, transporting and distributing energy, but a range of users with diverse needs must be catered for. They will include households, sports complexes, shops, factories and hospitals. Such users have their own identities (Chapter 7), which are in no way dependent on whether they are connected to the energy infrastructure or not. All of them will make greater demands in the future. In Dooyeweerd's terminology, there is enkaptic interlacement of producers and users in which the mutual dependence is ever-increasing.

A technological and philosophical analysis of the energy infrastructure of the future is of great importance for engineers, energy companies and governments. In the past, developments in the energy infrastructure were slow. Engineers had plenty of time to develop new products, companies had enough time to launch new products on the market, and the government could respond in a timely manner with new legislation. That time is over. Nowadays, all these activities largely run in parallel. All the players must have a comparable view of the future, understand the complexity of the energy infrastructure and 'translate' it into their own area of responsibility.

For engineers, this means they must develop the infrastructure in such a way that it meets the legitimate desires of users as well as possible. For technology companies, it means that they may not abuse their power to maximise profits but apply all their knowledge and expertise to provide the best service to all users at a reasonable price. For governments, it means that they issue legislation that does justice to the importance of energy infrastructures for society, prevents abuse of power by companies and combats energy poverty. With such complex structural interlacements, there must be alignment of responsibilities and interests between the various parties with respect to each other and in relation to society. In this coordination, the overarching norm of the 'general interest' or the 'flourishing of society' plays an important role.

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SOCIETAL BONDS SUCH AS FAMILY, CHURCH, SCHOOL, STATE, ETC. ARE ALSO INDIVIDUAL TOTALITIES WITH THEIR OWN INNER STRUCTURE. THEY TOO CANNOT BE REDUCED TO OR RESOLVED INTO A SINGLE ASPECT OF REALITY E.G. THE ECONOMIC OR JURIDICAL; IN PRINCIPLE THEY FUNCTION IN ALL ASPECTS OF REALITY. THEY ARE RADICALLY DISTINGUISHED FROM EACH OTHER, HOWEVER, IN THEIR INNER STRUCTURAL PRINCIPLE, FOR THIS DETERMINES THE TYPICAL END FUNCTION OF A SOCIETAL BOND.

HERMAN DOOYEWEERD

(*CS*, p. 147)

7
SOCIETAL STRUCTURES

INTRO

How is society structured? Is it simply a swarm of individuals who move in different networks? Or do distinct forms of social bonds exist – families, schools, companies, churches? And what about government? Is it just the top level in a societal hierarchy or is it one kind of association among many? Dooyeweerd believes that society is not composed of individuals but of communities, each with an 'inner structure' of its own and all set alongside one another.

PROBLEM: CHURCH, STATE AND SOCIETY

As we said earlier, in 1922 Herman Dooyeweerd was approached to become director of the newly created *Kuyperstichting*, the research bureau of the Anti-Revolutionary Party. After a discussion with some of the leadership, he wrote a memorandum and sketched the challenges this bureau would face. What will its political advice be based on? He believed it should be based on a clear insight into the foundations of the 'neo-Calvinist worldview' and how they could be applied to the major questions of law, economics and politics. He wanted to think through the relationship between church and state, state and society, government and subjects, and subjects among themselves, based on the idea of the sovereignty of God.

To develop that insight, Dooyeweerd wanted to start with great thinkers from the past such as Augustine and Calvin. He then wanted to subject the work of several modern anti-revolutionary thinkers such as Groen van Prinsterer and Abraham Kuyper to further investigation. The first studies he wrote for the *Kuyperstichting*

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clearly show how powerfully he was influenced by Abraham Kuyper. In particular, Kuyper's views on 'sphere sovereignty' appear to serve as the springboard for his envisaged update of the neo-Calvinist vision of church, state and society.

CONTEXT: THE QUESTION OF POWER

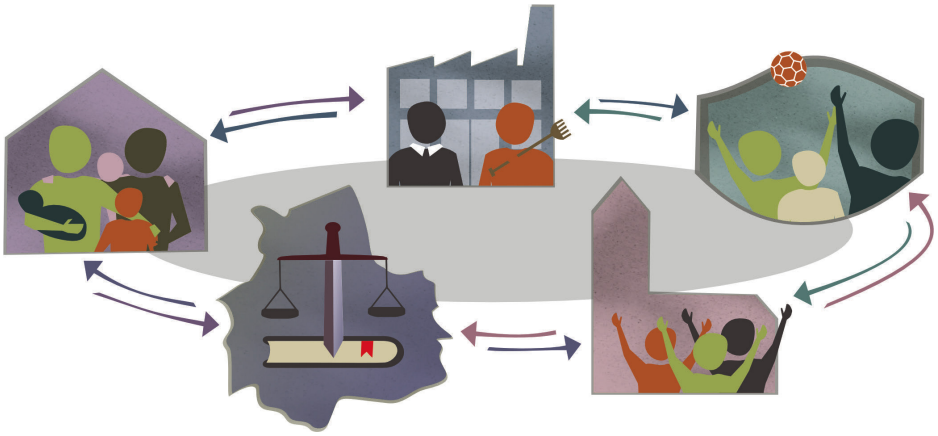
Abraham Kuyper's masterful lecture at the inauguration of VU University in 1880 lays bare his grasp of 'sphere sovereignty'. He begins with the declaration that the Netherlands, like many other countries, is in crisis. But the crisis is not about questions of progress versus conservatism, the ideal versus the reality, or wealth and poverty. It is ultimately about power. Kuyper points to God, the creator of heaven and earth. He is Sovereign over all things. Yet He delegates a part of his divine power to humans. In society, therefore, 'one never directly encounters God Himself' but you see that sovereign authority at work in '*human* office' (Kuyper, 1998, p. 466; cf. 1880, p. 9). The implication is: every power and every authority in society is derived from the authority of God.

Does that mean therefore, that God hands over his power to a single agency? To an emperor as sole ruler? To a state which decides everything that concerns its subjects? Kuyper emphatically rejects such ideas on religious grounds. In his view, God never transfers absolute power to sinful humanity. But leaving that aside, history shows that absolute state power always leads to a loss of freedom in society.

Kuyper consciously chooses a different route. In his view, society comprises many different forms of association; he calls them 'spheres' and ascribes to each 'its own sovereignty' (1998, p. 467; cf. 1880, p. 11). He speaks, for example, of the worlds of science, of commerce and of art as spheres. Specific norms hold for each of them, and each is guided by an authority peculiar to its role.

Kuyper uses the cogwheel to illustrate how those different spheres or forms of association engage with each other. A system of cogwheels only works well if the cogs intermesh smoothly. If one wheel wants to dictate how the others turn, taking no account of their nature, everything grinds to a halt. That's how it is with human society. It isn't homogeneous. It consists of many communities. Each community has its own nature and if it's well-coordinated with the others it plays its part in a rich, multi-coloured, dynamic society. But if one of those communities grabs all the power – state or church, for example – the others can't come into their own; society comes to a standstill.

In Kuyper's view, the state has a quite specific responsibility: to facilitate the flourishing of society. If that is to happen, it must ensure that each of the spheres is constrained in such a way that the others can function well. And it must also ensure that the individual is not trampled on by the power of the different societal communities.



JUXTAPOSITION of SOCIETAL SPHERES

Figure 7.1 Society consists of a large number of different societal spheres that interact with each other. The figure represents the juxtaposition of those spheres by arrows. From left to right, the icons represent the family, the state, the company, the church and the sports club. ⏎

CORE: A VARIETY OF COORDINATED RELATIONSHIPS

In the early years of his professorship, Dooyeweerd elaborated his theory of society and communal relationships. Everything in his work shows how much Kuyper's view of sphere sovereignty inspired him across the board: the different spheres in society, the coordination of those spheres and the view of government. At the same time, one can't fail to see the new philosophical twist that Dooyeweerd gave Kuyper's legacy with his theory of modal aspects. The core of Dooyeweerd's thought about society and its diverse worlds of activity can be summarised in these principles:

1 Society shows us a great variety of juxtaposed forms of association (Figure 7.1). Each has its own nature or character.
2 Persons function simultaneously in many spheres. Their position in each of them is (partly) determined by the nature or character of the common bond.
3 Every community ought to respect the uniqueness, freedom and responsibility of its members. Individuals must not be dominated by the associations in which they live.
4 These societal bonds are shaped by and obey non-arbitrary principles.

In this way, Dooyeweerd repudiates two dominant views. He opposes the conviction of individualism that a community is no more than many aggregated individuals. And he rejects all forms of statism, which assume that a government should steer the various social relationships in the direction it desires. With the above-mentioned principles, Dooyeweerd outlines a third way.

ELABORATION: THE THEORY OF SOCIETAL RELATIONS

SPHERES AND MODAL ASPECTS

Dooyeweerd emphasises the fact that communities like family, church, sports club, state and company function in every aspect of reality. Let's think about some of these spheres on the basis of a few aspects.

Figure 7.2 The state functions in all aspects: from the numerical to the faith aspect. This does not mean that all aspects are equally important in every situation. It depends on the context. ⏎

Start with the state (Figure 7.2). The faith aspect is reflected in the trust or distrust it inspires in its citizens and in other states. And how it and its citizens see the origin of its power. Does it come from God or from those citizens? The juridical aspect is reflected in the struggle for public justice; the economic aspect in the responsible budgeting of public resources; and the formative aspect in the way in which the power of the state is shaped, among other things.

Consider the family as another important communal relationship. The moral aspect can be seen in the care (or the absence of care) of family members for each other; the juridical aspect in the fairness with which parents relate to their children; the economic aspect in the household budget; and the biotic aspect in family likenesses.

Last, the company; it functions in all aspects too. The juridical aspect is clearly visible in all the regulations that companies must comply with; the economic aspect governs, among other things, the profit and loss account; and the social aspect is reflected in how management and employees interact with each other.

In short, the various forms of societal relationship cannot be understood from one aspect alone, for example the economic, legal or moral. They function in all aspects of reality.

QUALIFYING FUNCTION

But here's the question: if all societal relationships function in all the aspects of reality, how can we understand the uniqueness or specificity of these different forms of association? In other words, what makes a state a state, a family a family, and a company a company? In the analysis of 'Things' (Chapter 6) we introduced the concept of a 'qualifying function'. Dooyeweerd uses this concept for social relationships too. The qualifying function is characteristic of the 'identity' or the 'specific character' of a particular social bond.

The qualifying function of the state is reflected in the juridical aspect: it must contribute to law and justice in society. The qualifying function of a family is found in the moral aspect: it concerns the care of the parents for the children (Figure 7.3). Finally, a company's qualifying function lies in the economic aspect: it involves careful handling of valuable commodities and the profit and loss account.

Here is another example. Care institutions like hospitals may be operated by commercial organisations and business economics plays a vital role in them. But their constitution as care institutions can only be understood from the ethical aspect: care for the sick neighbour. The qualifying function of such organisations is therefore the ethical aspect.

Figure 7.3 All families function in every aspect. But what really makes a family a family is the care of its members for one another. And therefore, the ethical aspect (central mauve colour) is its qualifying function. ⏎

An institution's qualifying aspect must express itself across the whole gamut of that institution's functions. Churches, for example, are qualified by the faith aspect. This aspect comes to expression not only in the religious beliefs of church members, but also in all other functions (roles, tasks, aspects) of the church. Faith pervades the language that is used in the church. It directs the care churches offer to the poor. It informs the aesthetics of church buildings. It is embodied in rulebooks and in social interactions among members of the church.

FOUNDING FUNCTION

In the previous chapter's analysis of 'things', or entities, we introduced the concept of a 'founding function', describing it as that aspect which underlies the existence of the thing. And in the analysis of societal relationships, too, the founding function can help us understand those different communities better. We start with the family. A family comes into being as the result of the sexual relationship between a man and a woman. That is itself naturally a multi-aspectual relationship. But as regards children, the 'founding criterion' is that parents (as a rule) have a genetic relationship with their children and that sexual intercourse is a condition for that relationship. There are exceptions, of course, certainly in our time – think of adoption, blended families, or IVF with sperm from a donor – but Dooyeweerd focused his analysis on what was (in his time) the standard situation. According to him, the family is therefore founded in the biotic aspect (Figure 7.4).

Figure 7.4 The qualifying function (background colour) and the founding function (colour of foundation) belong to the grouping of functions that partly determine the identity of things and social structures. This figure makes that clear: three different societal relationships and three different groupings of functions. ⏎

But what about a sports club, a state or a company? It is clear that those communities are not founded in the biotic aspect but have acquired their characteristic form in the course of history. This means that they are founded in human formative activities; in other words, in Dooyeweerd's 'historical' aspect (Figure 7.4).

FREE DESIGN OR NORMATIVE PRINCIPLES?

How should we look at all these societal bonds? Are people free to shape them at will? Or must it be taken into account that certain principles play a role? It's an important question at the present time, and for two reasons. First of all, because of the influence of constructivism, which sees those relationships as social inventions. But also because of postmodern thinking, which assumes that every person freely shapes their own life and therefore also freely shapes the relationships in which he or she wants to live.

Looking back throughout history, it is evident that associations such as families, churches, sports clubs, states and businesses have all undergone considerable changes. At the same time, certain principles have held. For example, family members care for each other, churches hold religious services, the state punishes criminals, businesses (hope to) make profits. There are, in other words, constancies

that persist despite the major differences in how interactions are shaped throughout history. The question now is: what does this imply for the question of arbitrary design versus normative principles?

Dooyeweerd is convinced, in Kuyper's line, that every sphere is characterised by normative principles. In his view, every relationship has its 'own divine structure' and must show that 'God has posited its law of life' (*CS*, p. 137). Then, too, every relationship has its 'own sphere of authority and competence' that is 'directly derived from God's sovereign authority' (*VB*, p. 47). In other words, societal relationships are characterised by non-arbitrary principles and therefore cannot be shaped willy-nilly in any conceivable way.

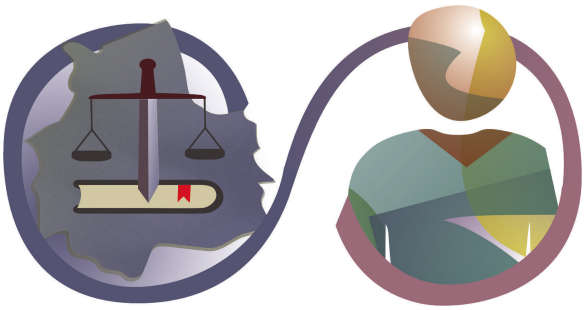
A good example concerns the way in which the tasks and responsibilities of the government are understood. An immediate echo of the principle of sphere sovereignty is the idea that governments must prevent any one societal sphere (e.g. the economy) from dominating other spheres (e.g. care, education, art). Dooyeweerd, consequently, rejects dictatorial views of the state because they severely restrict the freedom of political parties, the press, social media, religious organisations and educational institutions. On the other hand, he also rejects the liberal view of government. Liberals put all their cards on the freedom of individuals and on the autonomy of the market. Because of this one-sidedness they fail to do justice to (other) fundamental principles, most notably the principle of public justice.

At the same time, Dooyeweerd acknowledges that the way in which these supra-arbitrary principles have been shaped in history and culture can diverge widely. In many state constitutions, for example, we can find comparable principles such as basic rights, an independent judiciary, free elections and more. But this does not alter the fact that the way these principles are put into practice can be very different.

INDIVIDUALS AND THE SOCIETAL ENTITIES: ENKAPTIC INTERLACEMENTS

In Dooyeweerd's vision, people should not have to live under the comprehensive control of the societal relationships to which they 'belong'. There is another relationship in which we all live, namely to the Origin. People must have space – in whatever societal context – to be able to live in that relationship. An important question is therefore: how does Dooyeweerd justify his vision philosophically?

In the previous chapter we introduced the idea of 'enkaptic interlacement'. The special thing about enkaptic interlacement is that different 'wholes' are woven to-



ENKAPTIC INTERLACEMENT:
CITIZEN and STATE

Figure 7.5 In Dooyeweerd's view, a citizen must never be dominated by the state. He defends this view by analysing the relationship between a citizen and the state. In his view, there are two different entities (citizen, state) that are enkaptically interwoven in a new context, such that the citizen remains a responsible citizen, and the state can fulfil its own task. ⏎

gether in a new entity, yet they still maintain their own identities. Examples are the interweaving of tree branches in beaver dams, of the oyster and its shell and of twigs in bird's nests. According to Dooyeweerd, we find something similar in the relationship between people and societal communities (Figure 7.5). Despite the ties between individuals in the various communities to which they belong, each person remains a 'whole' with uniqueness and responsibility. From that uniqueness and responsibility, people help to shape the community but aren't absorbed into, or controlled by, it.

A LEVEL DEEPER

7.1 DIFFERENT SOCIETAL STRUCTURES

Dooyeweerd offers a nuanced differentiation of social spheres or communities.

He compares societal forms that expect to be maintained over time with social relationships having a more incidental existence. The former are 'community relationships' and the latter 'social relationships' in his

nomenclature. Relationships like the family, church, sports club, state or company have a sustained character and exhibit an internal unity – a community. They are 'community relationships'. When children are born or a grandfather dies, the family is not dissolved but remains a family. The membership of a sports club changes over time but the sports club is still the same sports club. When a civil servant retires the government continues to function. These communities are sustainable (they continue to exist despite changes in their composition) and are usually internally characterised by normative hierarchical relations: parents and children (family), office bearers and parishioners (church), coaches and athletes (sports club), and managers and employees (state, company).

For societal contacts that are generally not sustained and don't usually display any hierarchy, Dooyeweerd uses the commoner and shorter term 'social relationships'. The contacts between families in the same street, between a shopkeeper and his customers, between the passengers who travel in the same train compartment, and between writers and their readers fall into this category. When all the passengers alight at the rail terminus, the relationships are broken. When the book is finished, the relationship between writer and reader comes to an end or is very limited. There are many and diverse reasons for both the setting up of social relationships and their discontinuance.

We encountered Dooyeweerd's distinction of 'biotically and historically founded societal bonds' already when we talked in general about founding functions. The family is the best example of a biotic or natural community. It is founded in the genetic relationship between parents and children. On the other hand, the association of people in churches, sports clubs, states and companies are not natural communities; they are shaped by people over time. In other words, the founding function is the historical or formative aspect.

Another nuance is identified by Dooyeweerd in comparing 'institutional communities' with 'free associations'. Many societal structures are optional, but others are not. You can choose whom you wish to make friends with and whom you don't. You can choose which greengrocer you want to buy from and which you don't. For these types of relationships, Dooyeweerd uses the term 'free' or 'non-institutional' associations. You can join them at will and leave them when you choose. But there are other communities

that don't grant you that freedom. You are born without consultation as a member of a certain family and as a citizen of a specific country. For this type of societal connection, Dooyeweerd uses the term 'institutional communities'.

To get a clearer understanding of the nature of societal relationships and better definition of the relationship between people and their societal relationships, we come back to the difference between whole–part relations and enkaptic interlacements (Chapter 6).

We begin with whole-part relations. The modern Western government is a large-scale organisation. How do its various departments relate to the government as a whole? The same question can be asked about how a parent company relates to its various branches. In both examples, a whole-part relationship obtains. Ministries are part of the government and branches are part of the parent company. They do not have their own identity but derive it from the identity of the organisation to which they belong.

A completely different relationship is that of the cooperative or the partnership. For example, farmers unite in agricultural cooperatives to promote their interests. What relationship exists between the farmers and the cooperative? It is a form of enkaptic interlacement: the farmers hold on to their own identity. In that identity they collaborate in the cooperative.

A LEVEL DEEPER

7.2 SUBSIDIARITY AND SPHERE SOVEREIGNTY

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, major social problems arose in Europe. They have been variously spoken of as the 'social question' or the 'workers' question'. It was principally the Roman Catholic Church that wrestled strenuously with them. The papal encyclicals *Rerum novarum* (1891) and *Quadragesimo anno* (1931) outline the basic principles of Roman Catholic social teaching and offer tools for dealing with the problems mentioned. The most important principles of this teaching are solidarity, common good and subsidiarity.

Figure 7.6 In Roman Catholic social teaching, the concept of subsidiarity is important. The key question is: at what level of society do you place responsibility for something? The answer is: always place responsibilities in society and in its structures as low as possible. In the figure, the structures of state, company, family and individual are shown from high to low. The state is only responsible for that which lower structures cannot handle. ⏎

The principle of subsidiarity aims to determine the levels of society at which the various responsibilities for handling the problems should lie. The starting point is that responsibilities are set as low in the social network (or as close to the problem) as possible (Figure 7.6). That is to say, if a lower level in society (company, family, individual) can effectively arrange something, then a higher level (government) should not do it. A simple exam-

ple: you do not ask the national government to organise a food kitchen or neighbourhood barbecue. The principle of subsidiarity also applies within social relationships. If the employees in a company can do something themselves, then the management should not take over.

The positive meaning of the principle of subsidiarity is that the higher levels in an organisation are called upon where necessary to support the lower levels in bearing their responsibility. The negative meaning of this principle is that higher societal levels shouldn't take over the responsibility of lower levels.

The subsidiarity principle is an important addition to the principle of sphere sovereignty in respect of the hierarchical order within social relationships. It applies in the relationship between central government and local authorities, and the relationship between a company's board of directors and its various business units.

On the other hand, the principle of sphere sovereignty forms an important addition and correction to Catholic thinking. It is an addition because Dooyeweerd carefully describes both the specific nature of social relationships (qualifying function) and their mutual relationship (juxtaposition). It is also a correction as in Dooyeweerd's thought the principle of subsidiarity may only be applied across the various levels within particular societal relationships and not across the boundaries between different kinds of relationships.

EVALUATION AND CRITIQUE

The theory of societal relationships is intriguing in thought and rich in practice. It offers an alternative to (neo)liberal visions of society that take the individual as their starting point. It also offers an alternative to socialist visions of society in which the state is responsible for organising society. Above all, it offers an alternative to hierarchical visions of society in which a great leader, a powerful government or a dictator exercises power over the entire society. In Dooyeweerd's vision, 'the' community does not exist. It is better to speak of a 'hotchpotch' of juxtaposed societal structures that interact with each other. These structures influence each other in all kinds of ways without being allowed to dominate each other.

Jonathan Chaplin (2011a) believes that the conceptual innovations developed by Dooyeweerd are still of great importance for thinking through the development of society and the role of the state. But he also offers criticism. He thinks, for example, that the distinction between natural and formative bonds is untenable because biotically founded (natural) communities are also shaped by humans.

Henk Woldring and Dick Kuiper (1980) have pointed out that Dooyeweerd's theory does not cover the entire field of human relations. There are many phenomena that are less easily captured in his systematics. They include collectives of less definable structure and informal groups. The social media of today have indeed only multiplied these. We have a challenge here to develop Dooyeweerd's ideas further within contemporary social circumstances.

Other critical voices claim that his approach encourages conservatism. After all, if the normative principles for a particular social context have been defined, they can easily be declared 'sacrosanct'. As a result, critical reflection and necessary changes are obstructed. The criticism is understandable but not necessarily correct. It can be shown that normative principles are a powerful weapon with which to question the status quo. We have seen this time and again in the critique that Christian philosophers and professionals have brought to bear on society (Chapters 12-16). Another important pillar of Dooyeweerd's philosophy is that no philosopher or scholar can claim the insight to fathom the 'true' principles of relationships. Philosophers and scholars travel as explorers; they are limited by their own thought horizons and they need to be aware of the nature of scientific knowledge (Chapter 2).

TODAY: HOW DO WE FIGHT A PANDEMIC?

Early in 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic broke out. It severely disrupted social life and led to many fatalities. Could Dooyeweerd's theory of societal relationships help us to achieve a more effective and responsible crisis management? Let's see! To answer the question in respect of a pandemic, we need to distinguish between its so-called 'hot' and 'post-peak' phases. In the hot phase, the number of infections rises rapidly, and measures are taken to limit that increase and to limit the consequences of the pandemic. Rapid intervention is crucial and there is relatively little space for fundamental reflection. In the post-peak phase, the pandemic has largely been contained, but there is still the risk that it is reignited, and so preventive measures remain in force.

We can rightly speak of 'crisis' in a (threatening) hot phase. Action has to be taken at speed and in Dooyeweerd's view, government is then properly in charge: it must protect its population – and vulnerable groups in particular – by taking the right steps. In most Western countries, during the hot phase of Covid-19, government decisions were taken with reference to scientific advice as it emerged day-by-day. Sometimes there was no democratic control (emergency regulations were based on necessity) and sometimes that control was limited (the regulations were legislated with only cursory parliamentary debate). There was no time for discussion of the measures in the community and social partners were hardly or not involved in important decisions. After all, speed of action was of the essence. The legitimacy of the actions lies in the 'internal structural principle' with which government action must comply. The government's task, at the end of the day, is to maintain the legal order. That legal order is the condition for the proper functioning of society. Destabilisation of social life threatens legal order. Consider the collapse of crucial sectors in healthcare due to illness, threats to scientists and government officials, sabotage or mass protests fuelled by conspiracy theories.

But in the post-peak phase, things are different. Time is available then for social discussion and there is time to enter into consultation with social partners. Or, more fundamentally: the legal order being no longer under threat, there is breathing space for the justifiable coordination of all kinds of societal relationships. At the national level, this can be done by the national government. It can enter into dialogue with representatives of the various societal communities. Justice can be done in this way to their specific responsibilities. In such a consultation, school associations can decide to encourage home education only in defined situations. Hospitals can take responsibility for better distribution of patients. This type of dialogue promotes the quality of legislation and regulations and involvement in the pandemic. At the local level, this can be done by civic authorities as they consult with local social partners about measures that need to be taken in distinct geographic areas. If such dialogues are well conducted, this ensures that social partners accept involvement and are committed to shaping and complying with necessary measures. In other words, this ensures that the sovereignty and subsidiarity of the associations involved are optimally respected.

Note that the primacy given to a principle is partly determined by the context. In the hot (acute) phase the enforcement of the rule of law has primacy, in the post-peak phase there is room for the juxtaposition of social structures with their own sovereignty to be the guiding principle.

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[NOT] A
SINGLE PHILOSOPHICAL
THOUGHT IS POSSIBLE
WITHOUT A TRANSCENDENT
STARTING POINT.

THE PATH OF
CRITICAL SELF-REFLECTION
IS THEREFORE THE ONLY ONE
THAT CAN LEAD TO THE DISCOVERY
OF THE TRUE STARTING POINT OF
THEORETICAL THINKING.

HERMAN DOOYEWEERD
(*NC*, I, p. 22, 51)

8
TRANSCENDENTAL CRITIQUE

INTRO

We claimed in Chapter 3 that Dooyeweerd's thinking can be summarised in the words: 'reason isn't autonomous'. You need a starting point that precedes your thinking; thinking can't manage without one. That is why reason is never autonomous. And for Dooyeweerd, such starting points are religious: they have to do with the ultimate meaning and destiny of our existence. They are the engines that drive our thinking and acting. Everyone has such powerful motivations. They also propel cultures. When they overarch centuries, not merely generations, Dooyeweerd calls them ground motives (Chapter 3). In this chapter, we are pursuing our philosophical investigation of one specific manifestation of the role of cultural engines, namely their influence on theoretical thought.

The heading of this chapter isn't very inviting. But it shouldn't be scrapped. The reason is that Dooyeweerd considers transcendental critique to be the heart of his philosophy. By 'transcendental critique' he means in brief: a thorough interrogation of the intrinsic connection between theoretical thinking and fundamental motives. By 'intrinsic' he means a connection that is baked into the very structure of thought and into reality. And the adjective 'transcendental' refers to 'what must necessarily be presupposed' if we are to understand what theoretical thought is. Not even the most abstract kind of thinking can start and finish with itself. The laws of logic are taken for granted in thought and argument, for example. Dooyeweerd's point, however, is that much more than the laws of logic is 'necessarily presupposed'.

Dooyeweerd believes that the philosophers of the Western world need a shaking up. He is seriously troubled by the fact that philosophers and other thinkers don't communicate with each other much any more. It's important in his view that

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they engage one another in real conversation. And Dooyeweerd cherishes the hope and conviction that a philosophical interrogation of the intrinsic, or ingrained, starting points and motives in theoretical thinking can play a crucial role in preserving the thinking community. Rescue isn't beyond reach if his philosophical opponents will recognise that their thinking – just like Dooyeweerd's own – is driven by starting points and motives.

In this chapter we use 'presuppositions', 'convictions', 'motives', 'starting points' and 'assumptions' as synonyms, regardless of whether they are described as 'prescientific' or 'supra-theoretical' or 'transcendental'. But, be forewarned! The chapter deals with one of the most fundamental problems of all philosophy. It isn't easy, and it may have to be read and re-read to get a firm hold on the subject matter.

PROBLEM: A CONVERSATION ABOUT REASON AS A STARTING POINT?

How is it possible to talk about fundamental motives and assumptions in their thinking to those who disagree with us philosophically? If they are sure that only theoretical thought can decide what is true or what really exists, what philosophical arguments could convince them that they are mistaken? Can we demonstrate that their argument about thinking carries religious contraband? That an intrinsic contradiction lurks inside the engine of humanist thought – 'freedom and control'? Dooyeweerd responds like this: we can do so – but only in a conversation where we think *along with* our partners, testing their implicit assumptions, motives and convictions as we go. We have to get inside their thinking so that we can examine its structure and starting points from the inside. There's something very engaging about this approach; Dooyeweerd wants to understand his philosophical opponents fully, and so he thinks along with them as far as possible.

CONTEXT: THE DECLINE OF THE WEST

We must now revisit the 1920s and 1930s, a time that resembles our own in many ways. A time when irrationalism, fascism and populism are burgeoning. The First World War has left deep scars. A sense of doom casts shadows far and wide. Oswald Spengler gives an influential voice to this in *The Decline of the West* and Dooyeweerd

refers to his book. In the intellectual world, the viability of humanist ideals and the project of utopian progress in science, technology and culture are being threatened by growing doubt. Neo-Kantianism (A Level Deeper 5.1) is partly in retreat and partly in a process of renewal. And alongside it, there are new movements, different ones, each with its own approach and emphasis.

Dooyeweerd is mainly interested in the neo-Kantians and not those new movements. As he sees it, the new currents are leaving the proclaimed autonomy of reason and the worship of the theoretical mindset unscathed. They are building on exactly the same foundation, the same humanist ground motive with its freedom-and-control polarity as did Immanuel Kant and his followers (Chapter 3). Some of them, chasing after human freedom and independence above all, struggle to throw off every kind of restriction. Others swear by the knowledge and the harnessing of power and the promise that science and technology will (ultimately) give us full control of our cultural development. In Martin Heidegger, all this leads to a focus on what is authentic and most essential in being human, namely the endurance of our own finitude. In Jean-Paul Sartre, it leads to a harsh rejection of sham and falsity ('bad faith') or evasion of the duty of freedom ('man is doomed to freedom'). In Walter Benjamin, it leads to a complex exploration of authenticity in language and art.

The tension between the two poles of the humanist ground motive will only become a major theme for philosophy after the Second World War. So, in a sense, Dooyeweerd's critique of the humanist ground motive is more than twenty years ahead of what thinkers like Adorno and Horkheimer will later call 'the dialectics of the Enlightenment'; an insoluble tension between individual freedom on the one hand and the deployment of power through science and technology on the other.

CORE (1): THINKING IS NOT WORLDVIEW NEUTRAL

Leading philosophers in Dooyeweerd's time see their thinking as purely rational, unbiased, and ultimately critical. Dooyeweerd does not agree with them. They take it for granted that theoretical thought is the criterion of rationality and sound knowledge. But according to Dooyeweerd, this is an uncritical and prejudiced idea by which they jettison any awareness of the prescientific premises of their own theoretical thought. Dooyeweerd holds that theoretical knowing is no different from any other kind of human activity in this: it finds its origin and criterion outside itself, namely in its relation to the Origin (Chapter 1; Figure 8.1).

Figure 8.1 In thinking, we can take our own thought as the criterion of theoretical knowledge (left image), or we can base that thinking on a relationship with an Origin outside ourselves (right image). In the first case, Dooyeweerd holds, a vicious circle exists: thought itself is the basis for thinking and assigns itself too big a place, reaching beyond the given reality: the thought cloud rises above the frontier of created reality. ⏎

Could his approach really help restore the community of thought? After all, talk of an 'Origin' introduces an obviously religious idea. Isn't that confusing and just as uncritical? Dooyeweerd rejects this criticism. Nothing, after all, is so certain and nothing is so much a 'given' as the relationship to the Origin. It is simply in the nature of reality that nothing exists in itself, that everything is connected to everything, that the whole reveals an inner unity and ultimately refers to a source or power that has a transcendent character, looked at philosophically. For this source or power, he uses an abstract term: the Origin.

What is really dogmatic, thinks Dooyeweerd, is to exclude the Origin relationship *a priori*. Moreover, that relationship to Origin is so deeply ingrained in our being that it will always find something to attach to: something in the existing reality, something visible and tangible. This occurs, for instance, when 'matter' is seen as the Origin of everything. In other cases, it is the 'life force' (the '*élan vital*') that fulfils the role of Origin. It's from life force that everything springs in nature and in the evo-

lution of species. More recently, there are scholars who defend the view that 'consciousness' might be seen as the innermost core of everything that exists.

The transcendental critique is a most radical scientific-philosophical attempt to explore the Origin relation from within. The pre-theoretical starting point is a religious starting point because it reveals how we relate to the Origin. While that relationship is by nature religious, it is also a structural given. No one can say: 'Now I'm going to stop relating to the Origin.' Even refusing to raise the question of Origin is a way of relating to the Origin!

CORE (II): FOUR QUESTIONS AND TWO APPROACHES

In his critical study of how theoretical thought relates to supra-theoretical starting points, Dooyeweerd tries to answer four questions:

1 Are theoretical thought and supra-theoretical premises inextricably linked?
2 If so, how can that link be demonstrated?
3 Is philosophical study of that link a 'neutral' activity or is it governed itself by a supra-theoretical starting point?
4 Can that (possibly inextricable) link be proved with compelling arguments?

Dooyeweerd makes two attempts to answer these questions. The first way is laid out in his *De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee* (1935), the Dutch edition of his magnum opus. His approach there centres on the idea that you need to find a fixed 'viewpoint' somewhere if you are to bring the 'whole of reality' into your range of thought. He calls it an 'Archimedean point', after the Greek mathematician, physicist and astronomer who believed (or so they say) he could move the earth if only he were offered a fixed spot outside it on which to pivot a lever. In Dooyeweerd's opinion, the fixed point cannot be found in an autonomous rationality but in the relationship of the human person to his or her Origin, the Creator who, in the person of Jesus Christ, renews humanity and restores creation. But the Origin may also be 'supposed'. We see that when, for example, theoretical thought or something else in reality is 'divinised'.

You find his second attempt at the start of the enlarged and revised English translation of this work, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought* (1953-1958). He admits there that his first approach had taken for granted that philosophy really does have a focus upon 'reality as a whole'. He now observes that few philosophers share that assumption. He also finds now that the earlier attempt had not made clear enough how

the religious anchoring of theoretical thought could be demonstrated *from the inside*. So, to meet those deficiencies he is now embarking on a second attempt. But this time, what holds his attention is the nature of theoretical thinking itself. He shows that theoretical thinking always generates 'specialist knowledge' of which there are many aspectual kinds and that integrating these different forms of 'specialist knowledge' into a whole is not easily done. His conclusion is that you can only do it if you already have advance knowledge about the whole. And such knowledge about the whole is impossible without a supra-theoretical or transcendent starting point (beyond the reach of theoretical thought).

ELABORATION (I): DOOYEWEERD'S FIRST ATTEMPT

Dooyeweerd's first approach makes the 'Archimedean point' central. He focuses in particular on the first two questions we set out above: is theoretical thinking inextricably linked to supra-theoretical premises? And, if so, how can the link be proved? At first, Dooyeweerd constructs his answer as follows. The theoretical thought of scientists and philosophers doesn't just float around freely; it seeks something to hold on to, or a foothold for balance. Scholars in the special sciences need some such foothold because they always restrict their attention to just one specific aspect of reality and in that way, by definition, they lose the bigger picture. Philosophers also need something to hold on to. Yes, their thinking may perhaps be directed to the totality of things – the 'meaning totality' in Dooyeweerd's words – but where does it stand to obtain that view? It cannot support itself on thin air.

Why can't the philosopher's thinking be self-supporting? The main problem that confronts theoretical thinking itself is its connection with the whole, i.e. its relationship to everything else that exists. If it is seen as a part of the totality of things and absorbed or integrated within that totality, then it has lost its (Archimedean) independence. It needs that to maintain its claim to be the sole arbiter of what may count as truth and reality. Think of the famous Baron Munchausen who wants to pull himself out of the swamp by his own hair. That's just what the philosopher is doing if he imagines he can find a foothold for theoretical thinking in thinking itself but nevertheless maintains that this thinking belongs in every imaginable respect to reality, i.e. to the swamp, to the whole of things.

On the other hand, if theoretical thinking is seen as something that goes on apart from the totality of things, it couldn't pretend to say anything about the totality

because its own existence has now been excluded from the definition of 'totality'. Putting that differently: if philosophers think about meaning totality, their thinking cannot be self-supported because it must also think about theoretical thinking itself. So, if you want theoretical thought to rest in itself, i.e. to maintain its radical independence as arbiter about what counts as truth and as real, you have to choose between two evils: either lose the independence of theoretical thinking because of its absorption in the world or lose contact with the world as a result of the detachment of theoretical thinking from the world. Materialism is an example of the first position. If everything that exists is determined by material processes, including the laws of physics, theoretical thinking will also be determined by these laws. It will, thereby, lose its independence. Idealism, i.e. the doctrine that says reality should be seen as an expression of (immaterial) ideas, is an example of the second position. Idealism locks the thinker up in his mental reality. This detachment leads to alienation and disconnection from the real world.

So, something else is needed for thinking, an anchor, a hitching post, a fixed point. In Dooyeweerd's view, that fixed point can only be found outside the mind and outside the whole on which the mind is focused. At first, he wanted to say that this fixed point can be found in the human 'ego'. Nowadays we would say: the 'self', the thinking subject, the thinker who thinks. But that would be a strange manoeuvre because Dooyeweerd also claims that the thinking ego finds no rest in its thinking. He regularly quotes Augustine, who tells us that the heart is 'restless' and must go

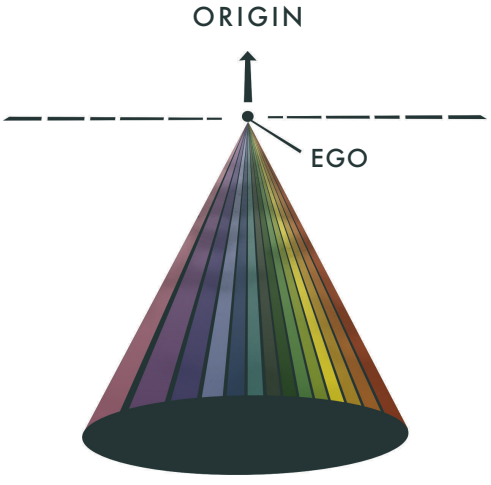

Figure 8.2 Reality, which is broken down into separate aspects by thought itself (the colours in the figure), can only be recognised as a unity by the human 'ego'. This ego finds rest in the Origin, which is beyond both thought and the object of thought. The dashed line in this figure indicates the boundary of theoretical thought (Chapter 1). ⏎

on searching. But Augustine also provides the answer: the human heart finds its rest in God. It is by focusing upon the Origin that the 'I' or the 'ego' finds its rest. It is illusory to think that the 'I' can stand on its own. Only in connection with a fixed point can the 'I' find rest. That fixed point is the Origin (Figure 8.2).

Dooyeweerd's point is clear in itself. He links theoretical thought with the idea of meaning-diversity. Every branch of theoretical thought pulls out only one aspect for its attention despite the multi-aspectual nature of reality. It makes use, moreover, of only one tool, the logical thinking function, which manifests itself in objectification, abstraction and analysis (Chapter 2). The researcher, if she wants to grasp the significance of her theoretical conclusions and, in that way, find something to hold on to, needs a view of the greater whole, while realising that she herself is part of it. When she realises that the cocoon of theoretical thought is a creation of her own, yet one that is nevertheless embedded in broader networks, even in life itself, she has found something to hold on to. Now, as far as life is concerned, Dooyeweerd believes that intrinsically and in all its facets life as such expresses and refers to the Origin. Therefore, when you come to realise that even in the most abstract activities you – the thinker – remain a concrete person, part of a fabric of meaningful relationships, then you get an inkling of what precedes all theory.

Dooyeweerd's critique of Kant and the neo-Kantians is that they are looking for the solution in the wrong place. They didn't point out the importance of the relationship with the Origin but concentrated on the thinking subject: a subject that they have reduced to an assemblage of abstract capacities. According to Dooyeweerd, this subject that carries out theoretical thinking is an abstraction detached from reality. It can provide no support because it is based on theoretical fictions.

ELABORATION (II): DOOYEWEERD'S SECOND ATTEMPT

In Dooyeweerd's second attempt, his research falls on the nature of theoretical thinking itself. And now, the questions that led his first approach are no longer centre stage, although they still play supporting roles. In his view, theoretical thinking has to engage with three fundamental questions:

1 What exactly is taking place in theoretical abstraction?
2 How can abstracted knowledge be reunited into a whole?
3 How does theoretical thinking relate to the thinking 'I'?

We shall discuss these questions like this: we formulate a more expanded version of each question, briefly summarise the answer and then give a brief explanation for each question/answer combination.

Question 1: What does the theoretical mindset abstract from reality as it is given in our naïve experience? And how is this abstraction possible?
Answer: In theoretical thinking we abstract from the integral coherence of all the modal aspects. We disregard the coherence and focus our attention on a single aspect. It is the 'opposites posing' (objectifying) and 'differentiating' (abstracting and analytic) activity of theoretical thought that carries this out.

Explanation: Dooyeweerd here applies ideas he had developed elsewhere (Chapter 2). In the theoretical mindset, a scholar consciously focuses her logical thought function on a single (abstracted) aspect of reality, the so-called '*Gegenstand*' (Chapter 2). But that 'focusing' on one aspect is (as human act) still embedded in concrete thought processes. When theoretical thought is equated with everyday knowing (naïve experience) then it operates on the same level as everyday experience and usually swallows it up. The many other aspects of real objects, aspects that are completely obvious in the layman's everyday experience, fall away. The wholeness of those objects can't be seen any more. The result is reductionism: the scholar's own theoretical point of view is rendered absolute. Reductionism is, therefore, the result of the absolutisation of an aspect of the object under investigation

Question 2: When the logical aspect is posed in opposition to another aspect in the theoretical mindset, from what point of view can we reunite ('synthesise') them?
Answer: If you try to achieve that synthesis within the theoretical mindset itself, you end up in the reductionistic '-isms' (physicalism, biologism, psychologism, etc.). These -isms result from the fact that some aspect of reality is taken as absolute. So, if you want to reconcile (unite, synthesize) the two aspects – i.e. the logical aspect that organises and guides the theoretical mindset, and some other aspect) – there is nothing for it but to work from a fixed point that isn't a component of theoretical thought itself. This point is the (supra-theoretical) ego (or self).

Explanation: Dooyeweerd starts from a rather controversial idea: theoretical knowledge consists of accomplishing a synthesis. On that view, this is how scientific knowledge comes about: the scientist sets one aspect of her thought processes, namely the logical aspect (objectification, abstraction, analysis) in confrontation with another aspect of reality (the physicochemical or societal, for example). Some-

thing like a struggle goes on between these irreducible aspects in her mind, a struggle for order and for the finding of patterns and mechanisms. Eventually she reconciles the two there and establishes a synthesis. The synthesis might be a structured observation, a hypothesis, a model or a theory. This is, of course, an abstract picture of how things really go on in science. But the point at stake is both relevant and topical. The question is this: how are the products of her objectification, abstraction and analysis going to be stitched back into the fabric of the greater whole? How does that fit into our everyday experience and into the world-and-life-views that are at home in that experience? Where do we find the framework for this reattachment? And what does the scientist think of her place within that framework?

Dooyeweerd says that the framework that's needed starts with us. The starting point is critical self-reflection. Without such prior reflection, we set off and get lost. The scientist's habitual outward mindset takes her towards modal diversity (Chapter 4). But there's no unity to be found there and certainly no foothold or peace. So, what about the inward route? Isn't that the way to a lonely, abstract ego? Well – it doesn't take Dooyeweerd there. In his view, that path leads us to the Origin and so to a deep sense of unity and connectedness.

We are now hearing Abraham Kuyper's voice again, talking about 'that point in our consciousness where our life is still undivided and still comprehended in its unity, not in the spreading branches, but in the root from which all the branches sprout'. In this context, Kuyper uses other metaphors: a 'common source from which the various streams of our human life arise and divide themselves' and of 'how in the depths of our soul, at the point where the soul opens itself to the Eternal, all the rays of our life converge as in one focus, and only there regain that harmony, which they lose so repeatedly and so painfully in life' (Kuyper, 1931, p. 20) (see also Chapter 10).

Superficially, these quotations sound introspective – the language of mysticism. But Kuyper and Dooyeweerd are too thoroughly permeated by coherence and order in the world at large to give that idea much space. Deep in our hearts there are intuitions of coherence, of unity and origin. These must be heard as resonances within us of a splendid order that comprehends all created reality. They make us aware of our responsibility, the responsibility of every unique creature towards the Creator of that order.

Question 3: How is it possible to reflect critically upon the self, to orientate our theoretical thought towards the self; and what is the true character of this orientation?
Answer: Critical self-reflection is possible and is accomplished as the 'I' directs itself towards the true or a supposed Origin of all meaning.

Explanation: In Dooyeweerd's view, it's by answering this question that the connection between theoretical thought and the *transcendent*, or supra-theoretical, starting points will be established. The idea that underlies this third question is made clear in Calvin's statement that self-knowledge depends on knowledge of God. Or, put the other way round, knowledge of God is key to knowledge of the self. This is what brings Dooyeweerd to think that a critical self-reflection focuses on the 'true or supposed Origin' of reality. In other words, self-knowledge is rooted in the human 'heart', the religious centre of our existence. It cannot remain bound to the sphere of theoretical thought; by its nature, self-knowledge reaches deeper and goes further than theoretical thought. Within the framework of the transcendental critique, nothing can be said about the content of this self-knowledge. But that is no bad thing for the project of a transcendental critique. It isn't, after all, about the content of self-knowledge, but about the intrinsic connection between self-knowledge and the possession of a supra-theoretical starting point.

A LEVEL DEEPER

8.1 COSMIC ORDER OF TIME

In this second attempt, Dooyeweerd delves even deeper into the structure of theoretical thinking. He is hoping to link up with ideas that he had developed in the meantime about reality as a whole. If there is a compelling connection between theoretical thought and its supra-theoretical starting points, it must surely follow in one way or another from the structure of reality itself. Dooyeweerd had previously introduced concepts such as meaning, origin, aspect (modality), unity and the ego. He will now try to show that they are all intrinsically interrelated by linking them with a new idea, namely that of reality as a 'cosmic order of time'. We already met this order of time when we discussed the concept of 'earlier' and 'later' modal

aspects (Chapter 5). It is this cosmic order of time which determines that reality shows both coherence and diversity simultaneously, that it can be understood as a whole, and that it ultimately refers to and is an expression of an Origin.

For Dooyeweerd, all these technical terms are not merely loose ideas, strung together according to an idiosyncratic logic. They are his attempts to express something intuitively and theoretically of the internal 'logic' of creation itself. The creation order is not a static programme. It's dynamic. It undergoes development again and again, relationally, in ways beyond our grasp. Even the thought processes of the philosopher are subject to, and determined by, the cosmic order of time. According to Dooyeweerd, reflection on the time order must inevitably bring us to acknowledge that knowing isn't self-supporting; it cannot rest in itself. The concepts of 'expressing' and 'referring' (Chapter 1) also apply to thinking. This referential relationship turns our attention to a supra-theoretical starting point. And that is the core of what Dooyeweerd says. We see here that in his second way Dooyeweerd even more tries to find the grounds for the recognition of the religious origin of theoretical thinking.

We return now to the four questions we set out under the 'Core' heading in this chapter. Dooyeweerd's second attempt can be summarised like this: he confirms the inner connection between theoretical thought and supra-theoretical starting points (question 1) but now advances the structure of reality (read: the cosmic time order) as evidence (question 2). He acknowledges that the discovery of this inner connection has to do with religious intuitions, for example the intuition that such an order exists (question 3). At the same time, he states that this will not detract from the force of the argument as long as the thinker is doing justice in her theoretical self-examination to the cosmically anchored principles that underlie all of reality and therefore also all theoretical thinking (question 4).

EVALUATION AND CRITIQUE

Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique has been heavily criticised from the start. Even his most important supporter, his brother-in-law Dirk Vollenhoven, didn't take it on board. His view of science didn't fit in with prevailing ideas. Colleagues who were sympathetic to the project as such disputed whether Dooyeweerd had really 'proved' anything. Dooyeweerd himself had attached great importance to that assertion. Time and again the question was asked whether it is even possible to prove that all theoretical thought has a religious starting point and do so in a religiously neutral way. The question seems obvious, but it also ignores the central point. Dooyeweerd wasn't concerned with an epistemological question. He wasn't asking how you can know if all thinking needs to have an overarching insight outside your own thoughts. He was concerned with a state of affairs in reality. He wanted to show that it is in the nature of theoretical thought itself – as a human thinking activity – that it, like everything in creation, relates to an Origin of meaning. This relationship is so fundamental that it determines even the most abstract thinking.

Incidentally, in the second version of his transcendental critique, Dooyeweerd had explicitly said that transcendental critique itself is 'of course' also determined by a religious starting point. This becomes clear, for example, as we move from question 2 to question 3. There the thinker must show his colours. Is he/she focusing on the 'true' or on 'a supposed Origin of meaning'? The question suggests that people even in their recognition of an Origin can get it wrong. An Origin is then searched for in reality itself, in matter, for example or in human autonomy, or in control by theoretical thinking and technology. For Dooyeweerd, God as Creator is the true Origin of all that exists

What sometimes remains underexposed in the discussion is that by demonstrating the necessity of a supra-theoretical starting point, the status of the theoretical proof will change. Proofs developed entirely from within, 'purely immanent proofs', no longer exist. Pure immanence is a theoretical fiction. But if such proofs don't exist, the evidential value of Dooyeweerd's project will also be undermined insofar as it is presented as a project that tries to remain immanent. Leaving the term 'evidence' for what it is, Dooyeweerd still has a point. The strength of his approach lies in the fact that he thinks along with his opponent for as long as possible. This makes the salient point very clear, namely that, for his opponents, theoretical thought is ultimately the measure of what counts as true and real. But theoretical thinking is never perfectly pure, and it offers only a restricted view of reality. Seen in this light, Dooyeweerd

was not only one of the first, but also one of the most radical critics of scientism. Scientism, as we already saw, will have only science as arbiter of what is true and real.

A more valid criticism is that Dooyeweerd chooses a very long detour to reach his goal and that this route may not (or may no longer) be the most suitable. This also comes to the fore in the later discussions. Some of his supporters (Klapwijk, Geertsema, Van der Hoeven) are in favour of a different, more hermeneutical approach. Their approach can be described as follows. Humans, as interpreting creatures, look for connections, a framework, a story. This also applies to science. Scientific results need to be explained, linked to each other or fitted into larger frameworks. But as we puzzle over and search for connections, primal stories about the origin, meaning and destination of reality echo in the background. These are terms with religious weight. Dooyeweerd was not trying to prove the existence of God with his philosophy. What he wants to say is that scholars who shut themselves off from this connection with broader underlying stories, intuitions and insights about origin, meaning and destiny isolate themselves needlessly from this broader and deeper reality and become one-dimensional and uncritical. The true nature of their position, of the implicitly assumed point of view, remains hidden from them. But an awareness of the background resonance of the great (often ancient) stories increases the critical potential of philosophy and science, it helps the thinker to shake off what seems obvious and to awaken from an uncritical, dogmatic slumber.

TODAY: A HOPEFUL MESSAGE THAT TAKES THE OTHER PERSON SERIOUSLY

What we find attractive in Dooyeweerd's approach is that it works from the inside. It takes the discussion partner seriously, right down 'to the bone'. This walking alongside and questioning the partner is productive. That's because, sooner or later, you will come across deeper motivations and starting points that turn out to be *internally* contradictory if they fail to match the structures that are given in reality. It's important to take note of this because it can control the attitude of journalists, administrators and intellectuals in science and society. Neglecting 'given structures' always leads to internal contradiction and ultimately to decline. This is not a prophecy of doom but an observation that can give a certain peace of mind and invite us into openness and creativity. Whether or not anything changes doesn't depend on the analytical adroitness or the visionary prowess of commentators and philosophers.

Eventually, the tide will turn. That is how things are. In philosophy, inner contradiction arises. In science, the -isms emerge – and they always evoke countermovements. In society, we find distortions and unwanted conflict.

Dooyeweerd's philosophy shows that it is still possible to offer sharp critique and yet take the opponent seriously even in times of polarisation, empty rhetoric and populism. It is precisely because the Christian ground motive is fundamentally hopeful that 'the other' can be approached invitingly. Even if you have to stand against the mainstream, it is always possible to connect with latent undercurrents of resistance. Cultures can remain under the spell of internally contradictory motives for a long time, and we can be discouraged by that. But even then, the possibility exists to look for and find the hidden voice of dissent, the critical potential, the neglected other that ultimately turns out to be essential.

"THE REFORMATION OF PHILOSOPHY IN A CHRISTIAN SENSE DOES NOT SIGNIFY THE INAUGURATION OF A NEW SCHOOL-PHILOSOPHY [*SIC*] SUCH AS THOMISM WHICH BINDS ITSELF TO THE AUTHORITY OF A PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEM AND THINKER. IT DOES NOT SIGNIFY THE ELEVATION OF CALVIN TO A *PATER ANGELICUS* OF REFORMED PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT. IT DOES NOT MEAN, THAT WE WILL SEEK A PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEM IN CALVIN THAT IS NOT THERE. IT DOES MEAN, HOWEVER, THAT WE WILL RELATE PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT IN ITS ENTIRE FOUNDATION, STARTING POINT, AND TRANSCENDENTAL DIRECTION, TO THE NEW ROOT OF OUR COSMOS IN CHRIST. WE WILL REJECT EVERY PHILOSOPHICAL STANDPOINT THAT LEANS UPON THE 'NATURALIS RATIO' AS A SUPPOSED SELF-SUFFICIENT ARCHIMEDEAN POINT. OUR AIM IS AN INNER REFORM OF THOUGHT WHICH IS BORN FROM THE LIVING POWER OF GOD'S WORD, AND NOT FROM AN ABSTRACT AND STATIC PRINCIPLE OF REASON.

HERMAN DOOYEWEERD
(*NC*, I, p. 522)

9
PHILOSOPHY AND CHRISTIAN FAITH

INTRO

We saw in the last chapter how Dooyeweerd tries to prove that science, even the most theoretical kind, always builds on prescientific convictions and motivations. He shows that those convictions and motivations are foundational and that they say something about one's view of reality. An underlying ground motive (Chapter 3) is expressed there. This chapter's opening quotation already reveals how Dooyeweerd understands the relationship between philosophy and faith. In his view, a 'reformation of philosophy' comes about by 'relating' philosophical thinking to Christ. In this chapter we investigate how that happens in concrete terms. In other words, how philosophy can be connected to Christian faith in the practice of thinking.

PROBLEM: CAN PHILOSOPHY BE CONNECTED TO FAITH?

Until now, Dooyeweerd has kept quiet about this concrete issue. His analysis was aimed at demonstrating that every human activity, including theoretical thinking, has its origins in something that precedes your existence and gives it direction. He uses terms like 'meaning', 'Origin', 'root' and 'law'. He begins, at one point, to speak about the 'true or supposed' Origin of all meaning and readers will suspect that Dooyeweerd means the God of the Christian faith by 'true Origin'. Yet he does not say that explicitly, at least not in his strictly philosophical work.

This raises questions. Is Dooyeweerd making a distinction between philosophy proper and worldview-ish philosophy? If so, how complete is the distinction? Does such a thing as 'Christian philosophy' exist for him? Throughout his work,

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Dooyeweerd tends to keep his analyses of reality, such as the theory of aspects, the theory of things, the theory of societal structures and his analysis of the theoretical mindset, separate from his worldview. But how far does this distinction extend? Does his philosophy allow him to connect Christian faith less abstractly and more substantially with philosophy and science? How should we understand such a connection? In the present chapter we shall look not only at Dooyeweerd's thinking about these questions, but also at how his brother-in-law, Dirk Vollenhoven, approaches the matter.

CONTEXT: CAN WE RESCUE HUMAN FREEDOM?

Dooyeweerd's thinking is saturated with concern about the culture and philosophical thought of his day. Society is hard at work trying to free itself from dogmas, whether ecclesiastical or philosophical. And philosophy is developing as secular, independent, critical and autonomous. But according to Dooyeweerd, its independence is only relative. Modern thinking remains bound, in his opinion, fundamentally and often unconsciously, to starting points or ground motives that have a religious character. And starting points aren't touched by scientific arguments.

Dooyeweerd lived through decades when new science and technology were being vigorously embraced. Their status had been climbing since the 18th century, with enormous trust in the truth content of scientific knowledge and in the possibilities that technology offers us. The scientific worldview revolves around certainty, control and predictability. Yet these developments had an important downside. An approach to reality that privileges science tends not only to embrace a deterministic worldview but also poses a threat to human freedom. After all, if laws of nature determine everything and the natural sciences can ultimately explain everything, what room is there for freedom, individuality and spontaneity?

Immanuel Kant (A Level Deeper 5.1) is one of the first philosophers to see the magnitude of this problem and his attempt to rescue human freedom is ingenious. Here is his solution: science operates only within the boundaries of theoretical knowledge and thought, whereas freedom will find its space and nourishment in the execution of willpower by a supposedly autonomous human will. But the price of his solution is crippling: a dualistic view in which knowledge and technical control of deterministic processes stand opposite to freedom, i.e. to the choices made by autonomous free will. This dualism is characterised by Dooyeweerd in terms of the

humanistic ground motive (Chapter 3) with its polarity of nature (science, control) and freedom. This ground motive has thoroughly inundated Western culture since the Enlightenment. And for Dooyeweerd, its dualism threatens human freedom because theoretical thought, harnessed to the desire for control, penetrates the whole of society ever more deeply.

CORE: PHILOSOPHY MUST BE ABLE TO STAND ON ITS OWN TWO FEET

In the debate about philosophy and religious faith, Dooyeweerd occupies a quite unique position. On the one hand, his philosophy is strongly inspired by the Christian life and worldview. That inspiration is deep and has self-evidence about it for Dooyeweerd. On the other hand, he considers that even when philosophy is religiously inspired, it must be able to stand on its own feet in terms of argument and conceptualisation. It must be testable and open for scholarly debate. In other words, as a philosopher you should not need to refer to religious convictions to make your point. Those references shouldn't be used as building blocks in your argument.

But the philosopher need not hold his tongue about religion or worldview. For example, there may be convergence between philosophical and religious insight. Both may point in the same direction and resemble each other in terms of content. Convergence isn't evidence, but it may serve as external confirmation of the plausibility of religious insights. The opposite applies if we find divergence, where the insights run further and further apart. If and where religion and philosophy contradict one another, there's reason for further study, each side being open to correction.

At the same time, religion is part of everyday experience for Dooyeweerd. It therefore has a much broader scope than scientific insight. All scholarship, including philosophy, is essentially abstract, and every discipline focuses on a specific theme or aspect. The scholarly disciplines together are like an archipelago surrounded by an ocean of prescientific experiences. These experiences precede theoretical thinking; they also correct and nuance it now and then. At the end of the day, even the most abstract philosophical insights must prove themselves in concrete reality: in dialogue with others and in application within a specific field of practice.

ELABORATION (I): DOOYEWEERD

Seen from a distance, there are three approaches to Christian philosophy. The first views it as a philosophy with a predilection for a certain theme or object of study. Think of philosophers involved in laying out evidence for the existence of God or arguments for the purposefulness of nature. In this approach, the 'what', the object of philosophical study, is a recognisably 'Christian interest'.

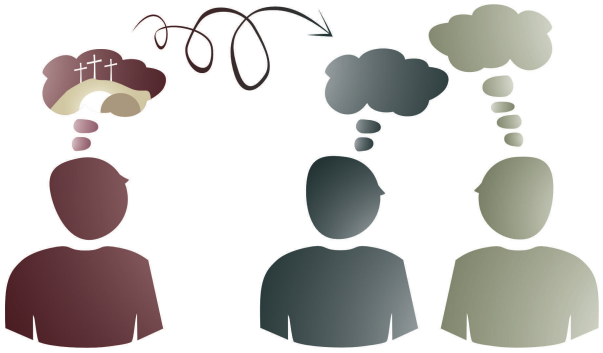
A second approach views Christian philosophy as philosophy practised in a Christian way. It's about the 'how'. It's Christian by virtue of the way in which its questions are conceived or put; or in the attitude philosophers have towards the objects of their studies. Think of the philosopher Sören Kierkegaard (1813-1855). He provides a radical example, emphasising that every thinker brings himself into his own thought process. Truth and meaning are decided by how you confront what you see to be true. In other words, truth requires truthfulness. The Pharisees, according to Kierkegaard, knew the Mosaic law to their fingertips. Yet what they said was deeply untrue, because of the insincerity of their reliance on the law.

The third form of Christian philosophy understands the Christian faith primarily as a source of inspiration. For some Christian philosophers, their philosophy is a further articulation of their own faith. For others, faith is seen as an answer to certain more or less universal existential questions. In this approach, the Christian point of view is one of the possible directions of exploration for answers to life's questions.

DOOYEWEERD: TRANSFORMATION OF RELIGIOUS INSIGHTS

Dooyeweerd is original; his approach doesn't really match any of the three. At first sight, his commitment seems to fit best with the third approach, namely faith as a source of inspiration. Many keywords in his philosophy, such as 'meaning' (Chapter 1), 'heart' (Chapter 10) and 'Origin', draw on neo-Calvinist insights about God, man and reality.

But be careful! Those Christian-inspired insights aren't acting as foundations within his philosophy; they function as pre-theoretical intuitions that still have to prove their worth within a philosophical framework. It is true of some of them that you can't demonstrate their correctness: they elude theoretical analysis. Dooyeweerd therefore explicitly says that philosophy cannot be an extrapolation of worldview insights. If you think of Christian philosophy as the theoretical expression of Chris-



CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY TRANSFORMS
INSIGHTS OF FAITH

Figure 9.1 Christian philosophy is not defined by its Christian content, method or inspiration, but by the attempt to transform (spiralling arrow) Christian beliefs and religiously formed intuitions into philosophical insights. These insights are up for discussion and are judged on their own merits in the philosophical debate (right side of the figure). ⏎

tian worldview, you overrate philosophy and misuse worldview. Philosophy has its own agenda and remains bound to the theoretical mindset. It is necessarily abstract. But worldview perspectives are at home in concrete life. They are more substantial, more comprehensive and more fundamental than philosophy.

For Dooyeweerd, therefore, what makes philosophy Christian isn't its subject matter (the 'what'), it isn't its method (the 'how'), nor simply its (Christian) inspiration. We can summarise his approach as follows: he *transforms* pre-theoretical intuitions or worldview inspiration into philosophical insight in such a way that the insight can stand up in philosophical debate as much as possible on its own merits, that is to say without explicit reference to religious sources (Figure 9.1). The philosophical debate must then deal with the content of the philosophical insights. These may always be questioned. They are not about the authority of a worldview or of religious sources. Philosophy is not in a position to question this authority.

At the same time, this view remains modest. Philosophising is always a theoretical and therefore limited way of knowing. It can never grasp the fullness and depth of everyday experience or of worldview insight with its religious commitment. So,

the worldview perspective can never be fully incorporated and transformed into philosophical theory. A difference persists. Because of that difference, there will always be traffic back and forth between philosophy and worldview. That's why we see Dooyeweerd in his more worldview-ish output repeatedly making the return movement from philosophical insight to ideas and insights inspired by his Christian worldview.

DOOYEWEERD: THE LIMITATIONS OF PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY

In summary, Dooyeweerd's work subdivides into at least three different projects. One is strictly philosophical: he wants to demonstrate that the humanist tradition with its emphasis on scientific rationality and individual freedom takes up a religious position just as much as thinkers in the Christian tradition (Chapters 3 and 8). Then, he works with a number of basic Kuyperian ideas on a systematic analysis of reality's law structure. This analysis crystallises out as a theory of modal aspects (Chapters 4 and 5), things (Chapter 6) and societal relationships (Chapter 7). Finally, he has a project in which he investigates various contemporary social themes from the perspectives of worldview and cultural philosophy.

Dooyeweerd never worked at an 'ontology', a theory about 'being' itself. What other thinkers call ontology, he calls 'cosmology': a structural analysis of the law side of reality. This follows from Dooyeweerd's sensitivity to the position of the thinker. When thinkers believe that they can say something about the whole of reality on theoretical grounds, they are taking their seat in God's place. For the same reason, Dooyeweerd – as a philosopher – never says anything about the existence of God. God reveals himself to humankind; humans can say absolutely nothing on their own initiative about God, and certainly not as a philosopher. On these grounds, he turns not only against mediaeval scholasticism with its proofs of God, but also against 17th- and 18th-century Protestant theology which theorises without embarrassment about the attributes of God and the relationship between God and creation. There's even a scholastic trait in the theological work of Abraham Kuyper, according to Dooyeweerd. What is 'scholasticism'? It's what happens when theoretical thought lifts truths of faith out of their context and puts them in a theoretical (i.e. theological or philosophical) context. Thinking like this turns the living God, the One who both reveals and hides himself, into an abstract supreme being with all kinds of properties. Dooyeweerd is one of the strongest 20th-century critics of this form of 'theo-ontology', the supposed study of God's 'being'.

If theology is a science – as Dooyeweerd regards it – the job of the theologian is complicated. In Dooyeweerd's eyes, systematic theology can be nothing but scholastic when it theorises about the essence, the attributes and the activities of God. Unsurprisingly, Dooyeweerd's relationship with the theologians of his day was not plain sailing, and Dooyeweerd's philosophy has never had a calm relationship with (systematic) theology.

ELABORATION (II): VOLLENHOVEN AND DIEMER

VOLLENHOVEN: PARTIAL THEISM AND PARTIAL COSMISM

Dirk Vollenhoven (1892-1978), Dooyeweerd's brother-in-law and colleague at VU University, works, like Dooyeweerd, with various Kuyperian concepts such as 'heart', 'law', the fundamental diversity of reality, and the sovereignty of God. He also agrees up to a point with Dooyeweerd's analysis of the modal aspects and his theory of 'things' (Chapters 4-6). Nevertheless, he chooses a different path when it comes to characterising the relationship between God and the cosmos. Vollenhoven, like Dooyeweerd, regards the law as the boundary between God and created reality. God stands above the law and ordains it; humankind, like all of reality, occupies a station below the law. But then, unlike Dooyeweerd, Vollenhoven characterises that relationship further and makes it the starting point of his research on other systems of thought. He finds that some secular philosophers draw a different boundary and deify part of reality. God, as it were (above the law), takes a bite out of reality (below the law). So that part of reality takes a place above the law (as boundary between God and creation) and is deified. Vollenhoven refers to their approach as 'partial theism' (Figure 9.2). A part, a slice, of reality becomes part of the Divine. One example of partial theism is the idolisation of human reason, the rational capacities of human beings.

The opposite may occur too: God is then, as it were, drawn down in part beneath the law: the cosmos takes a bite out of God! Vollenhoven calls this 'partial cosmism' (Figure 9.3). One example (suggested by Vollenhoven but not discussed in detail by him) is that properties of one person of the triune God are seen as properties of (created) reality. In that way, for example, the Holy Spirit might be seen as somehow incorporated as 'spirit' or 'spirituality' in everything. Vollenhoven goes on to make several further distinctions that would take us too far to discuss here. In his later work he develops a unique taxonomy of thought systems as they move across time. With that he maps the history of philosophy since the Greeks.

Figure 9.2 When a part of reality is deified, Vollenhoven speaks of partial theism. ⏎

Is Vollenhoven now contradicting Dooyeweerd by speculating about the being of God? No, that isn't the case. What we see is a difference in emphasis. Dooyeweerd believes we can say nothing at all about God in scientific terms. Vollenhoven gives himself a bit more freedom. He doesn't go as far as to define the being of God theoretically. But he certainly goes further than his brother-in-law in describing the relationships between God and creatures, including the existence of heaven and the angels. Heaven and angels are indeed creatures, though they seem in a way to escape the usual subjection to laws. Vollenhoven's different accents spring partly from his being also a theologian.

Do Vollenhoven's proposals relativise the coordination of law and creation? Is there a kind of 'intermediate zone' between God and reality; a zone beneath God but above the laws that hold for our reality; a zone in which the phenomena (angels, heaven, demons) are not divine, but are nevertheless not easy to accommodate in the analysis of the law structures that apply to us? These questions still hold relevance in our time with regard to the interpretation of spiritual and other 'supernatural' experiences and of miracles.

DIEMER: IMAGE OF GOD AND MIRACLES

The Dutch biologist, Johann Heinrich Diemer (1904-1945), thought intensively about the reality of miracles before his early death. His approach was completely in line with Dooyeweerd on the one hand but, on the other, it addresses what happens in Vollenhoven's 'intermediate zone' (our term).

PARTIAL COSMISM

Figure 9.3 When God is seen in part as belonging to created reality, Vollenhoven speaks of partial cosmism. ⏎

Above all, Diemer is opposed to the modernism he discerns in the traditional approach to miracles. Theologians and other scholars in that tradition have assumed that miracles reveal supernatural and direct interventions of God that temporarily suspend certain laws. God generally rules through forces and laws that He has established in nature. But they think He suspends them exceptionally, with a view to a higher purpose. Diemer charges such thinkers with adopting a kind of Deism (A Level Deeper 9.1). He thinks that this view of miracles (sometimes known as the 'God of the gaps' interpretation) makes faith vulnerable to scientific criticism. Someone will turn up one day and demolish the last surviving miracle, the resurrection of Christ, or declare it implausible on scientific grounds.

According to Diemer, Deism suggests that laws of nature have become independent of God's command. But nothing in creation possesses that kind of independence, not even laws of nature. Natural laws are not autonomous entities, or objectively determinable and unchangeable things. On the contrary, God's activity is continuous and immediate, even in the order that has been discovered in the creation. Even more precisely, we may say that God has set the order in what is created. But what we encounter of it, in the form of laws and regularities, for example, must not be simply identified with the ordering work of God Himself. We have very limited insight into God's creative and sustaining work. Science too, like all other human activity, is a response to this creative and sustaining work. The regularity that the scientist perceives is a fallible and abstract, theoretical interpretation. It's an interpretation that we should not equate with the all-encompassing word by which God creates and sustains.

A LEVEL DEEPER

9.1 DEISM

Deism emerged as a school of thought in the time of the Enlightenment. According to deists, God was active only at the beginning of the world's history, when He created a cosmos and made it obey natural laws. For the rest, He remains aloof. Deism is an attempt to combine Christian faith with a natural scientific, deterministic worldview. In scientific thinking, we can bracket out the existence of God because we are dealing with the consequences of divine action and not with God Himself. For the theologian who thinks in that vein, there arises a problem with miracles. Miracles can only be viewed as supernatural interventions into a deterministic order, which are based on a temporary suspension of the relevant natural laws.

In the further outworking of his own ideas, Diemer introduces one of Augustine's. It's one that allowed Augustine to distinguish between nature, as the normal course of things, and the highest law of nature that is hidden from those who do not (want to) know God. Miracles certainly contravene the usual run of events, but they do not defy this highest law of nature. God simply 'cannot deny Himself'. So, the miracle is not so much a proof of God's existence as a pointer to a depth dimension (or a 'highest law') in reality itself. Miracles reveal something of the meaning and purpose of what exists. In faith we catch a glimpse now and then of that ultimate meaning and destiny. This implies that, to the degree that one's faith deepens, the miraculousness of the miracle recedes into the background.

According to Diemer, the miracles Jesus performed were not dramatic gestures intended to astonish people. On the contrary, they stand in the sign of restoration, of re-creation, of remembering and retracing our steps towards the Origin. They remind us of the deeper destination of reality: 'The miracle therefore does not stand over *against* the lower law as a contravention, but as a higher law, which maintains the lower but meaningfully directs it towards a higher destiny, *above* it' (Diemer,

1963, p. 73; translation David Hanson). To use Dooyeweerd's terminology: miracles reveal the dimension of disclosure to us in reality. They lift a corner of the veil that obscures what God ultimately and most essentially has in mind for the cosmos He created.

EVALUATION AND CRITIQUE

Dooyeweerd's strength is that he makes such a clear distinction between theoretical and everyday knowledge. That helps to keep the task of philosophy limited and clear but not to let it be taken over by worldview thinking or Christian spirituality. The philosopher can be inspired by religious sources. In fact, there is no philosopher who does not draw directly or indirectly from such a source. Yet philosophy is first of all a theoretical activity with its own methods of argumentation and proof, and at its best works as much as possible from within its own discipline and using its own tools.

This approach also has a downside, namely an unfruitful relationship with theology. Dooyeweerd was apprehensive about the poor critical capacities of theologians, including his Protestant colleagues. They were clearly amenable to belief in the independence of theoretical thinking in reformed scholasticism, for example. In that type of theology, faith insight has become infused with theoretical system building, to the degree that dogmatic-theoretical insight has dominated the practical insight of faith. The objection may be understandable in its context, but Dooyeweerd laid so much stress on it that it never led to a fruitful debate.

The wall that Dooyeweerd builds between philosophy and theology is so high that it also affected the relationship between philosophy and Christian faith. In his thinking some important aspects of Christian faith are too little explored: the role of evil, the significance of salvation, the role of the Messiah, the perspective of struggle, hope and expectation. It is also possible to criticise the image of God that emerges from his work as one-sided. It's a picture that emphasises God's omnipotence and sovereignty but not God's willingness to suffer weakness and brokenness in advancing his purposes of compassion, redemption and love. The messianic perspective of restoration for what has been broken is not absent in Dooyeweerd, but it gets meagre coverage compared to the emphasis on the sovereign Creator. He sees salvation more as re-creation than as a life lived imperfectly in anticipation of the end (eschatology). This strikes the contemporary reader as one-sided. Why

should redemption (re-creation) not be given a closer relationship to anticipation, hope and eschatology?

What is at stake, more generally, is the richly coloured nature of God's involvement in the world. Given Dooyeweerd's appreciation of everyday knowledge, a much more differentiated image of this involvement could have been painted. In the everyday world, there are multitudinous activities by which people seek contact with God – practices of conversation, explanation, liturgy and prayer, with a palette of meanings, stories and experiences that is rich beyond description. These stories and experiences provide a layered image of how people conceive of divine involvement with the world and themselves. Those experiences could nourish philosophical insight, whether or not they are helped by insights from systematic theology and church history.

Other thinkers in the neo-Calvinist intellectual tradition show much more openness for that dialogue between philosophy, theology and religious experience. We have in mind the work of Klaas Popma, Johan van der Hoeven, Calvin Seerveld, Henk Geertsema, Jim Olthuis and Nicholas Wolterstorff, among others.

TODAY: ANALYTICAL PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Dooyeweerd attaches great importance to the breadth and richness of everyday experience. This is – always – fundamental, even as we are thinking through the relationship between philosophy and Christian faith. Dooyeweerd's work looks colossal. Yet he champions a modest idea of philosophy. It is always a theoretical pursuit with limited access to the truth. This modest, cautious conception means that he doesn't haul in Christian insights and intuitions to serve as building blocks in the structure of his arguments. Those are also relevant considerations and motives today, for example, in the discussion with adherents of the analytical philosophy of religion. Philosophy of that sort offers a wide platform for the debate about proofs of God's existence and the attributes of God.

Dooyeweerd's modesty ought not to be an obstacle in itself to a fruitful relationship with theology or with the analytical philosophy of religion. Nevertheless, Dooyeweerd and many of his followers have only achieved that productive relationship to a limited degree. Time and again the objection was raised that you can't theorise about truths of faith without doing violence to the nature of those truths. But it created a paradoxical stand-off. This philosopher, more than any other, called

attention to the allusiveness and fecundity of everyday experience. And faith is a vital part of that. Yet with him, in fact, there was only a limited exchange between that many-sided faith experience and fundamental philosophical thought. Happily, much more can be seen with other representatives of the neo-Calvinist intellectual tradition. With them we see a less rigid partition between theory and faith experience and more appreciation for the many differing forms of religious knowledge and experience. To reflect on 'what no eye has seen, nor ear heard' and on 'what has not entered into the heart of man' (1 Corinthians 2:9) need not always turn out to be some kind of theorising.

"

WHERE SCRIPTURE SPEAKS IN A PREGNANT RELIGIOUS SENSE ABOUT THE HUMAN SOUL OR SPIRIT, IT ALWAYS COMPELS US TO SEE IT AS THE HEART OF ALL OUR TEMPORAL EXISTENCE, OUT OF WHICH COME ALL THE ISSUES OF TEMPORAL LIFE. SCRIPTURE NOWHERE TEACHES A DICHOTOMY IN TEMPORAL EXISTENCE, BETWEEN 'RATIONAL-SOUL' AND 'PHYSICAL-BODY' (OR A TRICHOTOMY BETWEEN 'MATTER-BODY', 'SOUL' AND 'SPIRIT'), BUT IT GRASPS THIS TEMPORAL EXISTENCE IN ITS ENTIRETY AS A BODY THAT IS DISCARDED AT DEATH.

HERMAN DOOYEWEERD
('32 Theses on Man',
Thesis 5)

10
HUMAN BEING

INTRO

Who am I? What does it mean to be human? Does the human creature have a soul, and if so, what do we mean by 'soul'? What is the place of human beings in the universe? How do we differ from animals? Big, existential questions each and all. And they acquire new meaning in our time. Are we really so special as human beings? Astronomers have pointed out that we're made of the same stuff as the rest of the universe. Evolutionary biologists have shown the close affinity between humans and animals. Neuroscientists see human behaviour as a product of physical processes in the brain. Cognitive and information scientists tell us that advanced intelligence isn't reserved for humans. Humans, indeed, are capable of all kinds of things – not least in medicine, in control of nature and in energy generation. Even so, they are at war with each other, personally and in groups. What kind of creature is a human being – to be capable of so much evil? And what do we want to be as humans in view of the many and great evils we seem to perpetrate?

We see Dooyeweerd, particularly when it comes to humankind, repeatedly referring to the Bible. And when we get to matters like 'heart', 'soul' or the relationship to God, then we see faith knowledge obtained from Scripture being transformed into philosophical concepts (Chapter 9).

PROBLEM: THE SOUL, MATERIALISM AND DETERMINISM

Dooyeweerd seems to be working on two different subjects when he writes about what it is to be human. The first theme concerns the human soul. What is the soul? Can it exist apart from the body? How do we deal with that age-old tradition which

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saw Christians defending the separability of body and soul? The second theme is how we deal with the Enlightenment legacy. By way of the scientific revolution, this legacy has led to the rise of materialist and determinist views of being human. What should we do with this materialism and determinism, especially when it concerns human nature?

CONTEXT: TOWARDS AN ANTI-DUALISTIC VIEW OF HUMANKIND

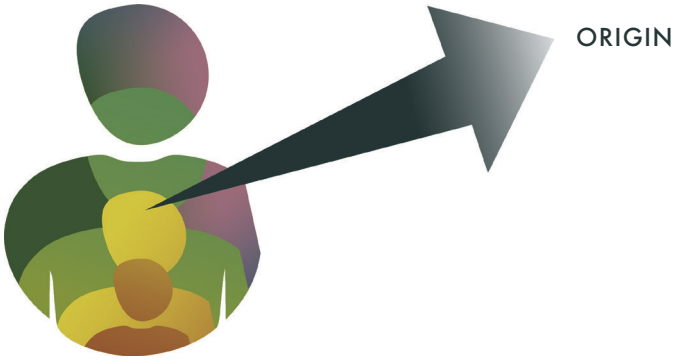
Dooyeweerd never wrote a full-length essay on human personhood. He planned to devote the third part of *Reformation and Scholasticism in Philosophy* to philosophical anthropology. But it wasn't published. What was preserved of it is an extensive sketch that was only recently translated into English (Dooyeweerd, 2011). Dooyeweerd also wrote a paper on the theory of human existence for the internal correspondence bulletin of the Association for Calvinistic Philosophy in 1942. That paper has come to be known as the '32 Theses on Man'. Despite their brevity, his theses give us a clear picture of what Dooyeweerd thinks about being human. We encounter Dooyeweerd there at his best, characteristically combining religious radicalism and broad scientific curiosity. His interest radiates widely over many disciplines and the scientific insights of the day. At the same time, he focuses on the core, the religious dimension of being human. It is precisely this combination that leads to an important correction of traditional views on the soul, especially in theological circles.

Dooyeweerd doesn't aim at one particular audience. He seems to have immersed himself in recent developments in biology and the philosophical response to them by thinkers such as Arnold Gehlen and Adolf Portmann. It is clear that he has also taken note of developments in Sigmund Freud's depth psychology. It's only later, in a debate with VU University biologist Jan Lever, that Dooyeweerd starts writing about the implications of the theory of evolution. As interesting as this may be, the most remarkable thing in retrospect is that Dooyeweerd so vigorously opposes dualistic views of the relationship between body and soul (or spirit). This anti-dualism was novel then and it still occupies a minority position in Christian circles. It touches the heart of his philosophy, and it flows from the consistent elaboration of its main ideas.

CORE: STRUCTURE AND DIRECTION GO TOGETHER

As Dooyeweerd analyses what it is to be human, he goes to great lengths to show how – to put it succinctly – the philosophical concepts of 'direction' and 'structure' presuppose each other and are intertwined.

Direction has to do with how we orient ourselves to the Origin. That 'orientation' begins in the human heart and is controlled by so-called ground motives (Chapter 3). It is in the heart, as we heard him quote Abraham Kuyper earlier, that our existence opens up to the Origin of all that exists. How this happens depends on the ground motive that permeates our existence. Ground motives are fundamental, existential driving forces that reach much deeper than temporary opinions or preferences. They propel existence forward and give it direction. They provide the motivation that helps us in our search for meaning and purpose. Dooyeweerd sees them as the inescapable ground in which our existence is rooted.



THE HUMAN: STRUCTURE AND DIRECTION

Figure 10.1 Dooyeweerd combines two basic ideas in his theory of man. The person as a whole consists of interwoven substructures (the colours in the image). Humans are also, and pre-eminently, beings that seek direction by orienting themselves from the heart (starting point of the arrow) toward the Origin. ⏎

The structure of the human body, meanwhile, is an interweaving of various substructures. Dooyeweerd describes it as a nodal point of interlacements. That's how he arrives at the idea of man as an 'enkaptic structural whole', a term we shall return to below.

These two basic ideas – man as a direction-seeking being and as a coherent whole of interlaced substructures – are not independent of each other; they presuppose each other (Figure 10.1). 'Structure' and 'direction' belong together; there is no structure without direction and no direction without structure. This is because reality is created and, one way or another, everything in it refers to and expresses, the existence of its Creator. Reality exists as meaning; in fact, it *is* meaning, according to Dooyeweerd (Chapter 1). Structure and direction are interwoven in this being meaning. Dooyeweerd now also applies this idea to the human person. No part of being human stands alone: everything is connected to everything. The way in which the coherent whole of interwoven substructures (structure), develops and takes shape, expresses how we in our concrete existence relate to the Origin (direction).

In many dualistic views, body and soul are separate from each other and seen as different things. The human body is then considered to be our 'structure' and the human soul something like our 'direction'. Dooyeweerd is fundamentally at odds with these views. In his view, body and soul are interwoven in every respect. But how?

ELABORATION: HUMAN BEINGS AS 'ENKAPTIC STRUCTURAL WHOLES'

Our existence as human beings is structured. We function as organisms (biotically), we experience the reality around us (sensitively), we think (logically), we relate to others (socially) and so on. And we do all that at the same time. While we think (logical), our hearts beat (biotic). While we interact with others (societal), we are aware of many other things (sensitive), and we gesture (symbolic expression). The problem is how to understand our complex, dynamic and relational existence as human beings philosophically.

As we've seen, Dooyeweerd distinguishes aspects and things. Aspects are ways of functioning ('how?': Chapter 4) and things are identifiable 'wholes' ('what?': Chapter 6). Things function in all aspects, in some as subjects (actively) and in others as objects (passively) (Chapter 5). Aspects can also assume different roles. For example, they can have a qualifying or a founding (or foundational) function (Chapter 5).

Dooyeweerd's view is that things correspond to internal structural principles that specify the qualifying and foundational function of a thing. For each type of thing, the different aspects are grouped, or structured, in a specific way (Chapters 5 and 6).

With this set of concepts, Dooyeweerd could have said that humans are a special kind of entity with a thing-like structure, as are trees, chairs and businesses. But he doesn't say this. His most important reason is that we are beings with agency, and able to account for ourselves. This is expressed in both the structure and the direction of being human. We will look first at the structure and then the direction.

FOUR SUBSTRUCTURES

Dooyeweerd distinguishes four relatively independent (but interlaced) substructures or component parts. Those substructures are a physicochemical, a biotic, a sensitive and an 'act' structure. Humans share the first two substructures with plants, the first three with animals. But only humans have an act structure. They are fundamentally different creatures from boulders, plants or animals. Humans demonstrate this in being able to give direction to their existence. They take initiative; they understand and react with comprehension; they are accountable for what they do, and they know their place. In other words, humans act responsibly by giving direction to their existence. This 'direction-giving' is made possible by the act structure which involves the choices we make from the heart. We'll come back to the latter, but we focus next on the interlacement of substructures in humans.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF INTERWEAVING

To understand the interweaving of partial structures in humans, we go back to Chapter 6, and to the distinction between whole–part relationships and enkaptic interlacements. In the whole-part relationship, the wholes and the parts share the same qualifying function. We mentioned as an example the robot and the modules that make it up (Chapter 6). However, there are also entities that consist of interwoven thing structures with different qualifying functions. We introduced the term 'enkaptic interlacement' for that. Ecosystems may, for instance, exemplify an enkapsis (= interlacement) with great mutual dependency between animals (qualification: sensitive), plants (biotic), soil and water (both physical). Yet these enkaptically interlaced substructures don't form a new whole.

In other situations, a new whole is generated. We then speak of an 'enkaptic structural whole'. In the enkaptic structural whole, substructures retain a relative independence (and modal qualification), but in their interlacement with each other they form a new whole with new properties.

For an example of an enkaptic structural whole we can look at the Hermes of Praxiteles – a statue attributed to the Greek sculptor Praxiteles in the 4th century BC. The qualifying aspect of the untreated marble of the sculpture is physicochemical. But a sculpture is more than just the marble. The creative intentions and craft of the artist have disclosed aesthetic qualities hidden in the marble. These gifts have come to expression in the interaction with the material. It is the interaction between the qualities of the material and the creative intention and aesthetic grasp of the artist that is decisive in this process. As a result of this interaction the marble has been transformed into something new: an enkaptic structural whole. Without the marble there's no tangible image and without the artist's imagination the marble isn't a sculpture. Imagination and craft combine to overcome the resistance of the material and to draw out its potential to become something new: a sculpture.

HOW DOES DOOYEWEERD NOW SEE THE HUMAN BEING?

Dooyeweerd sees human beings, first of all, as enkaptic structural wholes. There are, more specifically, four substructures present in humans – a physicochemical, a biotic, a psychic (sensitive) and an act structure – interwoven into a new whole, the human body (Figure 10.2).

In his view, the 'body' is more than a bag of molecules. But it is also more than a sum of physicochemical, biotic and psychic structures. The body encompasses our entire existence as an experiencing, acting, interacting being. All four substructures – the act structure, therefore, included – belong to the human body as an enkaptic structural whole. So Dooyeweerd starts out with a very broad definition of the human body. The body actually encompasses everything. It is, he says, the 'temporal, existential form of human life' (Thesis 7).

Unlike sculptures, the body is not qualified by any single modal aspect, but interchangeably by different ones (Thesis 21). It is the extremely flexible and expressive nature of the act structure, the highest substructure, which makes that possible. In human actions, now one modal aspect leads, and then another. We have contact with someone now (social), a bit later we do some work (formative), and we won-

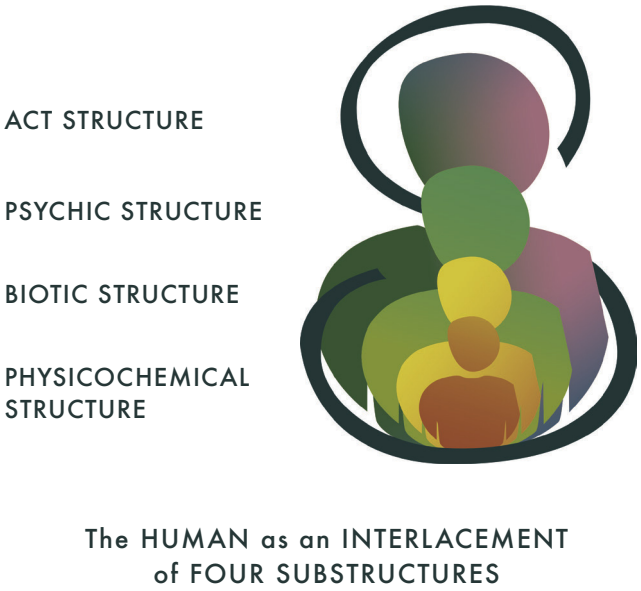


Figure 10.2 Dooyeweerd's human being is a whole, a body that consists of four substructures that are enkaptically interwoven ('S'-shaped ribbon). The act structure is the highest of them, is unique to humans, and is qualified by different modal aspects (as can be seen from the multi-coloured filling). ⏎

der whether we couldn't tackle something more efficiently (economic). Dooyeweerd calls the act structure the free field of expression of the human mind. It is plastic and undifferentiated. 'Plastic' means that people are free and formative in their actions. 'Undifferentiated' means 'not further specified'. We can move in any direction in our act life. Acts are not concretely visible actions, but intentional, inner activities that originate in the human heart. We can think of the role of attention, memory, perception, feelings, wishes and ideas of all kinds.

The four substructures – physicochemical, biotic, psychic and act structure – are hierarchically interlaced. None of them stands alone. The 'lower' ones are 'morphologically bound' to the 'higher': the physicochemical to the biotic, the biotic to the psychic and the psychic to the act structure (Thesis 10). 'Morphological' refers

to the body shape (*morphē* is Greek for 'shape'). It is in the body shape that the substructures become interwoven. This reference to body shape is striking and actually very modern. Dooyeweerd is not only concerned with the skin as the boundary of the body, but also (and especially) with the fact that our mental, social and other acts are embedded in our body. Our act life is 'embodied'. At the time that Dooyeweerd wrote this (around 1942), a similar insight was also coming to life among other philosophers such as Helmuth Plessner and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. What Dooyeweerd writes is very reminiscent of Merleau-Ponty concept of body-subject ('corps sujet') and, in his footsteps, of later accounts on 'embodied cognition'. The embodiment of mental, social and other activities takes place in a body that is constantly interacting with itself and the environment.

In order to explain the interlacement of the substructures, we reach back to the concepts of foundation and disclosure (Chapters 5 and 6). Founding can easily be seen also as 'enabling'. Lower substructures provide foundation for the higher: the physicochemical substructure provides a foundation for the biological, the biological substructure for the sensitive (or psychic), and the sensitive substructure for the act structure. The principle of foundation reveals how strongly the substructures are interwoven. In addition, the concept of disclosure is important: the higher substructures disclose, or unlock, the lower ones: the physical-chemical substructure is disclosed by the biological, the biological substructure by the sensitive, and the sensitive substructure by the act structure. The disclosure principle shows how the higher substructures guide the lower: the lower substructures are disclosed or given just such a form as is needed to make possible, or enable, the higher. The disclosure concept shows something else here: the substructures are powerfully interwoven without losing their own qualification.

Dooyeweerd doesn't say very much about the physicochemical structure. He says a bit more about the biotic structure which is described as having a 'vegetative' qualification. What that refers to is the autonomous nervous system, responsible for the homeostatic regulation of breath, heartbeat and perspiration. But the biotic structure, as we just saw, does not stand alone: it is disclosed by the psychic and the act structure.

In the sensitive or psychic structure, Dooyeweerd thinks of sensory capacity, consciousness, temperament and affective expression. He speaks of an 'animal' structure, whose functioning is largely beyond the control of the human will (Thesis 8). Only because the psychic sphere is bound to the act structure can it achieve its human purposes (Thesis 11).

As mentioned, the act structure and its 'acts' refer to what happens internally as external 'actions' are launched. Attention, memory, perception, feelings, wishes and ideas all fall under the qualification of 'acts'. With them we orient ourselves in the world. We do so by tuning in to the panoply of norms that Dooyeweerd distinguishes. In their acts, people intentionally focus on something in reality or in their own inner world, for example on something they think or plan to do. But as they do so, they remain in contact with deeper motivations (the heart, the ground motives). In fact, act life manifests itself in three basic directions: knowing, imagining and willing (Thesis 14). At this point, Dooyeweerd joins the tradition of so-called faculty psychology that distinguishes between knowing, imagining (often also: feeling) and desiring (willing).

In order to understand fully our actions as human beings, we need another notion, namely that of the heart as the concentration point of human existence.

THE HEART AS THE SPIRITUAL CENTRE OF THE PERSON

Ultimately, for Dooyeweerd, the question of what we are as persons is a religious question. This goes with his view of the heart as the 'supratemporal' centre of our temporal existence. Drawing on biblical language, he sees the heart as the dynamic fount from which every stream of our life issues. All our human functioning converges in the heart, so it is described as the 'concentration point' at the deepest level of our existence, and as the 'religious root' of our temporal existence. It's not a thing; it's not a Greek or Cartesian substance; it's not even (self-)consciousness. It is nothing in and of itself. Yet everything concentrates upon (and in) our heart and everything we think, feel or aim to do springs from it.

The heart, as the integration hub, or concentration point of human existence, is the *locus* of our orientation towards the Origin, the point in which we relate to the Creator. 'Concentration' doesn't mean the active, conscious effort that we need, for example, to solve a tricky mathematical problem. And it isn't meditation or a form of mindfulness. Dooyeweerd speaks of an 'innate impulse', a fundamental religious direction, the dynamic orientation of our selfhood, not only in our consciousness, but in every aspect of our being. To sum up: the heart is the source of our actions; it determines how our act structure matures and what the acting person focuses on.

Dooyeweerd refers in this context to the biblical use of the term 'soul'. Characteristic for the Bible are the many meanings of the term 'soul'. The 'soul' (Hebrew: *nephesh*) is associated, for example, with breath, life, fecundity, receptivity, fidelity, morality and with our connectedness with one another and God. Dooyeweerd tries to integrate elements of this broad biblical approach into his systematic framework – exemplifying how he transforms faith experience into philosophical insight (Chapter 9). According to Dooyeweerd, the soul is part of our daily existence in its temporality and diversity. But the soul also draws us towards what transcends the temporal sphere. It forms the core of an irresistible religious dynamic as a result of which people keep searching for fulfilment and wholeness. Such fulfilment and restoration are only found when we direct our lives to the one true source of meaning, i.e. God as Origin of all meaning.

Having said that, Dooyeweerd rarely speaks of 'soul' and prefers the word 'heart'. The reason is that 'soul' has been contaminated in the Christian tradition by age-old ideas of body and soul as separate entities. That happened, to start with, in antiquity (especially with early Plato) and it came up again during the Enlightenment (with Descartes and others). Instead of being the focal point of all human existence, including its physical nature, the soul was turned into an immaterial substance alongside and above the body. Dooyeweerd proves to be a powerful antagonist of this dualism which has been very influential in theology. For him, the heart (or soul) is where everything about us comes together, including the most physical and earthy aspects of our lives. These aspects are just as important as the mental and religious ones. It is in their hearts that people respond to God's self-revelation as Creator and Redeemer, whether they like it or not. The deepest thing that can be said about being human is that we are responsive beings in this specific, religious sense.

Many themes converge in the idea of the heart as a concentration point: the idea that religion, our relationship with the Origin, encompasses the whole of human existence (it isn't just one side of our life); the deep restlessness of human existence that is expressed in the longing for unity and wholeness; the relationship between self-knowledge and knowledge of God. This last theme, as we saw in Chapter 8, is inspired by the first sentences of Calvin's *Institutes*, which warn us that we can never attain self-knowledge apart from the knowledge of God. It is in the relationship with God that we learn to know ourselves. God and human creatures relate to one another immediately. There is, in other words, no (earthly) mediating instance be-

tween God and us, whether church or clergy or music or icons. God reconciliates Himself with us in Christ. This is a thoroughly dynamic experience, a process of falling and getting up, of confusion and rest, of powerlessness and liberation, of humiliation and glorification.

SUPRATEMPORALITY?

Unlike the physical-biotic body, the heart (or soul) is not subject to death in Dooyeweerd's anthropology. Now, in view of what we have said before, this is a puzzling statement. If it is so closely bound to our physical-biotic existence, how can it exist when the physical-biotic existence comes to an end? With this in mind, Dooyeweerd introduces a new term to us: supratemporality. What does he actually mean by 'supratemporality'?

There has been much ado about the term and the matter. But we can say for certain that Dooyeweerd doesn't think the heart is immortal or that it 'moves house' after death, as a separate entity, to another reality. Nor does he think it's eternal or that it transcends time and stands aloof from everyday, tangible reality. That would bring him into the orbit of body–soul dualism; something he vigorously opposes. What he wants to say is that the human being, as a person, continues to exist after death in an unfathomable way.

We can no more conceptualise this continued existence after death than we can capture the idea of the 'supratemporal' heart. 'Heart' is itself a 'boundary concept', the expression of an intuition that has its basis in the Bible's language about humankind and the human soul. The heart – or 'soul' – is present in everything we do and experience. It's a dynamic which determines and guides our other intuitions, feelings and actions. It brings life and gives shape to our existence. And so, for Dooyeweerd, the heart is not subject to temporal death. We continue to exist after our death. But if you ask: exactly how? – then we do not know.

This continued existence after our death is not in conflict with the concept of 'spiritual death'. Our heart or soul may perish indeed, namely in spiritual or eternal death. By spiritual death, Dooyeweerd alludes to a life lived under the illusion that existence is possible outside of God. That illusion leads to spiritual poverty and finally, spiritual death. People may be spiritually dead before they die. This happens when they try to detach their lives completely from any relationship with the Origin.

A LEVEL DEEPER

10.1 SUPRATEMPORALITY, MODAL ORDER AND CONNECTION WITH GOD

In a more technical sense, 'supratemporality' must be understood in the context of Dooyeweerd's systematic philosophy in which temporality is bound to modal diversity. Though it is a rather abstract idea, it can best be explained by using the prism metaphor discussed earlier (Chapter 4). The still-unrefracted (white) light depicts the relationship with the Origin. It is 'supratemporal'. The broken, refracted light consists of the fan of modalities, or modal aspects. So 'temporality' is the state of 'being broken apart in time', just as the rays are made to diverge in the prism. Dooyeweerd speaks about the cosmic order of time as something determined by the refraction of time in the spectrum of sequential modalities. Temporality is thus associated with modal diversity. The sequence of the modal aspects expresses a certain time order. Some aspects are 'earlier', others 'later' (Chapter 5). The physical 'precedes' the biotic; the 'aesthetic' comes after the 'economic'.

When Dooyeweerd talks about the supratemporality of the heart, he is alluding to the transcending of temporality in this limited modal sense. The heart (soul) transcends modal diversity but doesn't float above, or lose contact with, our earthly existence. It helps us to orientate ourselves to the supratemporal sphere of wholeness and unity. In the movement towards that unity and wholeness, our existence becomes centred and finds connection with the Origin.

EVALUATION AND CRITIQUE

How can we understand our human existence in time – with those substructures that we can distinguish in theory, but are completely intertwined in daily life – as a deeper whole with a religious destination? That's the basic question that Dooyeweerd is trying to answer. We can only say that his attempt is both ingenious and ambitious. And that answer is still relevant today as we think about human beings and the social relationships in which they live and move.

Dooyeweerd's polemic has several important targets. First is the body-soul dualism that was very much alive in his time, even in Christian theology. We discussed this already. He also aims at the -isms, the various ways of granting absolute status to single modal aspects. Humans are more than 'matter', more than the evolutionary pinnacle, more than *homo economicus*. Human lives are about more than individual freedom and maximum self-development. Finally, he insists on humanity's religious destination. What holds for reality as a whole also applies to humankind, but then in a special way. Human beings exist, like everything created, as meaning; we are from and through and to God. But with humans, there's more: agency, responding in action to the call of the Origin. Such issues are current in our day. We encounter them in questions like: are humans robots? Is the 'I' an illusion? Can consciousness be reduced to physical, biotic processes? Or is there a consciousness that underlies the evolution of all matter?

It is impressive to see how Dooyeweerd always brings in the special sciences as he faces up to questions of his time. He may see recent scientific findings as extending or confirming his systematic distinctions. He can also warn against boundary transgressions if he sees scientists trying to plant their own insights in another field of research without regard for the specific character of that distinct discipline.

There are certainly questionable ideas too in Dooyeweerd's anthropology. We have referred to the question of the heart's 'supratemporality'. That discussion was tough; it led to many misunderstandings, and we now see that it cost a lot of energy with minimal returns for systematic thought.

And what about the evolution issue? Dooyeweerd made a start by reflecting on the meaning of the theory, but never got around to handling more profound questions that might ultimately have consequences for his systematic philosophy. For example, what does the idea of 'creation order' mean in the light of present knowl-

edge of cosmology and evolutionary biology? Are all laws unchanging from the start or do they vary over time?

Dooyeweerd also paid only passing attention to the meaning of evil for our anthropology. Moreover, his understanding of the hierarchic interlacement of bodily substructures easily leads to an overemphasis on the individual and on 'top-down' control of human behaviour. Developmental psychology has taught us the vital importance of secure attachment in the early years and that self-regulation is largely determined by our relations with others. The theory of emotion has made us aware that emotions are less eruptions of a kind of animal substructure than subtle reactions that say something about ourselves as well as what goes on around us. Emotions play a major role in tuning in to others, developing empathy and shaping moral intuitions.

TODAY: BEWARE OF REDUCTION!

The moral of the story we have told above is that one can participate fully in academic debate without letting go of central Christian viewpoints. Dooyeweerd's contribution to the debate about humankind is a combination of openness, sharp analysis and radical refusal. He was extensively and openly cognisant of what the sciences can tell us about humanity but he subjected all that to penetrating analysis, along with what it does and doesn't imply for our image of human beings; and he radically rejected every attempt to reduce the religious basis of human existence to a phenomenon that science can analyse. To make his point, Dooyeweerd develops an impressive, philosophical, conceptual apparatus. From where we stand today, we might want to criticise several things in that conceptual apparatus. But in terms of commitment, breadth and radicality, Dooyeweerd's approach is still at a level that few thinkers reach.

How then would Dooyeweerd respond to the astrophysicist who says that we humans too are just made of stardust and need to understand ourselves as part of a cosmic chain? He would acknowledge that the physical material of our universe embeds inherent possibilities for human becoming, but that those possibilities call for orderings that fall outside the boundaries of natural science. Dooyeweerd would also warn us not to deify the notion of stardust. Or in response to the evolutionary biologist who wants to emphasise the similarity and continuity between humans and certain primates, Dooyeweerd would point to the agency of humans

and the responsive nature of human existence. When psychologists reduce religion to an explicable response to the need for reassurance, certainty and hope, then Dooyeweerd's thinking points us to the fundamental difference between these needs and the religious desire for wholeness and fulfilment.

When my studies ended, I decided I didn't want to leave VU University without reading something by one-time VU professor Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977), the father of Reformational philosophy. At first, his work seemed extremely complicated. I read about the many ways a chestnut tree could be observed, analysed and described – with legal concepts, for example, when it comes to ownership rights or economic terms when the wood was being valued. However, it came to light that none of these scientific approaches could do justice to the totality of meaning of the tree, to its individuality, its core, its being a tree.

In Dooyeweerd I met a phenomenologist who wanted to do justice to the exuberant diversity of creation. He didn't aspire to an ideal image of pure, untroubled, unprejudiced observation just for the sake of the findings. To my mind, Dooyeweerd is read too much as a purely rational and normative thinker. The poetic, artistic, empathetic and (the almost) tender side of his work is overlooked in his own, Reformational circles. In his scholarly, well-considered, often very dry discussions, you can still find hidden pearls. I am not now thinking only of that careful and affectionate language about the chestnut tree in his garden. I also bring to mind his consistent use of the word 'creation' instead of 'reality' and of his writing about the heart: sober, unsentimental – and therefore so penetrating and truthful. The human heart, which sinks its roots in Christ.

DÉSANNE VAN BREDERODE (2011),
Dutch novelist and philosopher

11
AFTER DOOYEWEERD

INTRO

Dooyeweerd died in 1977. Three years earlier, on the occasion of his 80th birthday, he gave a television interview about his life and work. He is strikingly modest about its impact and thinks it won't last more than 30 years. Then it will have done what it had to do. In fact, things have gone very differently.

PROBLEM: WHAT NEXT?

But this needs to be said first: Dooyeweerd's legacy is without doubt majestic, fundamental and monumental. Everything in it connects. You can't prise one stone loose and expect the rest to remain intact. But these grandeur and coherence have their downside. They make such a tight unit of his work that you could almost think you'd have to adopt his thinking entirely to get anything out of it. What's more, his text is far from easy to read. His very personal style makes what he writes sometimes difficult to penetrate. So now, what hope has it got? What can readers do with it all when they share his inspiration but find the whole construction too much?

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CORE: DOOYEWEERD'S PHILOSOPHY FANS OUT UNPREDICTABLY

Dooyeweerd's self-deprecating prediction didn't come true. His project took root among a number of students who could work with it, each in their own way, not only in the Netherlands, but across the world. No one could have predicted what was going to happen. His work enjoyed influence in particular with a broad cohort of students and recent graduates whose interest was principally in worldview terms. Dooyeweerd's thinking arrested the attention of people who were looking for meaning and purpose in life, who needed a language and a framework that would help them understand their time and get a grip on developments in society.

There was scholarly interest, but it was found mainly among academics in non-philosophical disciplines and among professionals who found Dooyeweerd's systematic distinctions important. That led to numerous interesting, often technical, and sometimes idiosyncratic publications.

In the first decades after World War II, philosophical discussion among his 'followers' was concentrated on central ideas like 'law', 'creation', 'antithesis' (between belief and disbelief) and 'ground motive'. But there were also discussions about 'Christianity and culture' and how philosophy should relate to theology.

Initially, and for some time, only a limited number of professional philosophers invested their work in Dooyeweerd's thinking. Works of substance were written by Henk van Riessen (1970), André Troost (1983), Johan Mekkes (1960, 1971, 1973), Hendrik van Eikema Hommes (1972) and Henk Hart (1984, 1995). But scholarly interactions accelerated in the new century, with books by André Troost (2005), Danie Strauss (2009), Bennie van der Walt (2010), Elaine Botha (2007), Roy Clouser (2005), Henk Geertsema (2021), Sander Griffioen (2003, 2022) and Lambert Zuidervaart (2016). Developments at VU University in Amsterdam are thoroughly documented by Woldring (2013).

At the same time, intellectuals with a mission at the interfaces of science, society, politics and public administration were seeing the potential of Dooyeweerd's systematics for application to other areas of scholarship than philosophy itself. We think of people like Bob Goudzwaard (1976), Hans Rookmaaker (1970), Bong Ho Son (1972), James W. Skillen (1994, 2014) and Egbert Schuurman (2003, 2009). In the next section we will illustrate how this early stream has gradually swelled, if not to a torrent, at least to a steady flow of scientific and technical work.

ELABORATION: WORLDWIDE RECOGNITION AND CRITICISM

In this section, we will sketch a few broad lines, with no pretence of completeness, first in historical terms, then thematically.

HISTORICAL SKETCH

The impact of Dooyeweerd's thinking was stimulated by the establishment of special chairs for Christian philosophy at state universities in the Netherlands from 1948 onwards. There were as many as eight of them at a time. Reformational professors such as Sytse Zuidema, Klaas Popma, Johan Mekkes and Henk van Riessen implanted in their students a sense of the deeply religious origin of many cultural tensions. They analysed the inner logic of those tensions, showing how they typically posit some feature of reality as absolute. Students in their classes swelled the membership of the Association for Reformational (at first 'Calvinistic') Philosophy to make it at one time the largest philosophical association in the Netherlands. It now publishes a popular scientific magazine (*Beweging*; later renamed *Sοφie*) and a scholarly journal (*Philosophia Reformata*). The Dooyeweerd chair was established at VU University Amsterdam in 1986 on behalf of the VU Fund. It has been occupied by Henk Geertsema until 2008 and then by Gerrit Glas.

Dooyeweerd retired from VU Amsterdam in 1965 and was succeeded there by Hendrik van Eikema Hommes. Henk van Riessen and Sytse Zuidema became full-time professors. The upcoming generation included Johan van der Hoeven, Jacob Klapwijk, Sander Griffioen, Henk Geertsema, Meyer Cornelis Smit and Jan Dengerink. It is their doctoral students who spread Dooyeweerd's ideas far afield after his retirement. They came from Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Mexico, South Korea, South Africa, Australia... then went home, gained recognition in existing institutions and sometimes established their own.

Henry Stob and H. Evan Runner had already introduced Dooyeweerd's philosophy in the 1950s and 1960s at Calvin College (now Calvin University, Michigan, USA). Their impact on scholars like Theodore Plantinga, Albert Wolters, Henk Hart, Jim Olthuis, Calvin Seerveld, Lambert Zuidervaart and Bernard Zylstra was profound. Many of those had emigrated from the Netherlands as youngsters after WWII, and Runner's energy now catapulted many of them back home for doctoral study at VU University. Soon after winning their PhDs, Hart, Olthuis, Seerveld, Wolters and Zuidervaart were appointed at the Institute for Christian Studies (ICS)

in Toronto which was founded with the energetic enthusiasm of Paul Schrotenboer. Zylstra was its President until his early death. As Dooyeweerd's final doctoral student he published a thesis on Harold Laski's political philosophy. Others went to Redeemer College (now Redeemer University, Ontario). John van der Stelt and John Kok taught at Dordt College (now Dordt University, Iowa, USA). Some came from other backgrounds. James (Jim) Skillen went to teach at Dordt briefly before founding and presiding over the Center for Public Justice in Washington, D.C. Roy Clouser studied briefly with Dooyeweerd and became Professor of Philosophy, Religion and Logic at the College of New Jersey. His widely read book, *The Myth of Religious Neutrality* (1991; 2nd ed. 2005) draws attention to Dooyeweerd's philosophy.

Coming from South Africa, Danie Strauss, a Dooyeweerd admirer with encyclopaedic interests, gained his PhD with Van Riessen and became head of the philosophy department in the University of the Orange Free State (now University of the Free State) in Bloemfontein, South Africa. Between 1994 and 1997, he headed the Dooyeweerd Centre at Redeemer University in Ancaster (Ontario, Canada), a unit committed to collecting, translating and publishing Dooyeweerd's works. His *Philosophy: Discipline of the Disciplines* (2009) became a comprehensive introduction to the central role of philosophy in scholarship. At Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, South Africa (now: North-West University), a group of like-minded scholars had come together already in the 1950s and '60s. The philosophers Hendrik Stoker and Jan Taljaard taught students such as Nico van der Merwe, Elaine Botha, Johannes Venter and Bennie van der Walt. From South Africa likewise, the theologian-philosophers, Jeremy Ive and Craig Bartholomew, carried their Dooyeweerd studies to Britain. Bartholomew first held the H. Evan Runner chair at Redeemer University, wrote a popular introduction to neo-Calvinist thought with Mike Goheen (Goheen & Bartholomew, 2008), and then succeeded Jonathan Chaplin in 2017 as head of the Kirby Laing Institute for Christian Ethics in the United Kingdom.

A truly significant role, though little referenced today, was played in the international expansion of Dooyeweerd's influence by his student, Jan Dengerink, when he was secretary to the Board of Curators of VU University in Amsterdam. Dengerink carefully nurtured his many worldwide contacts with the students who came there to pursue doctoral studies. Wearing a different hat, he also resurrected, along with Pierre Marcel (see below), the remnants of a series of International Calvinistic Conferences held in the 1930s and only brought to an end by WWII. Their Kuyperian-Dooyeweerdian instincts jointly guided the establishment of a new International

Association for Reformed Faith and Action: IARFA. Dengerink was able to bring together persons from the 'tired' post-war European reformed communities, including some from behind the Iron Curtain, and the 'lively' Dooyeweerdian postgraduates and teachers from VU University. Zylstra and Schrotenboer were at the centre of this movement and IARFA played a crucial role in enthusing reformational people in the United Kingdom.

Eventually based in Leeds and known as WYSOCS (West Yorkshire School of Christian Studies), the UK group was led by Ruth and David Hanson, a psychologist and surgeon respectively, who had jointly played an essential role in IARFA. In 2016, WYSOCS became the Thinking Faith Network. Other leading UK reformationals include the prolific author and broadcaster Elaine Storkey (1985, 2001), who focuses on gender and sex in relation to social change; Richard Russell, a revered mentor to many students in philosophy; and political scientist Jonathan Chaplin, who wrote an important book on Dooyeweerd as social philosopher (2011a) and has written on both international and church-state relations. In this group, Andrew Basden (2017, 2019) achieved the most prominent academic position as Professor of Human Factors and Philosophy in Information Systems at Salford University. His work has shown the value of Dooyeweerd's systematic philosophy in computer science and business studies, while his website https://dooy.info/ provides a comprehensive online reference to the philosophy and its relation to other schools of thought. Steve Bishop, Mark Roques, Richard Betts, Richard Gunton and Rudi Hayward carry reformational enthusiasm onwards in the 21st century.

Though French interest in Dooyeweerd has never been widespread, it began when the eminent *théologien réformé*, Auguste Lecerf read *De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee* shortly after its publication. With the remark, 'He's amazing!', he showed the books to his student, Pierre Marcel, who was duly sent off to Amsterdam to study the philosophy and teach it in France. Marcel wrote two doctoral theses on *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought* and was instrumental in establishing the Faculté Jean Calvin in Aix-en-Provence. His French exposition of Dooyeweerd's thought is now available in English (2013).

Scholars inspired by the legacies of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven have found platforms elsewhere around the world. We can mention some, although singling them out inevitably does others an injustice. Bong Ho Son (Son, 1972), a Korean theologian, studied at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, obtained his doctorate at VU University, Amsterdam, and then held numerous positions in South Korean universities. Son acquired great prestige as an ethicist, public intellectual

and social activist (a church planter and founder of care facilities). The publications of Yong Joon (John) Choi (2000, 2018), on whom Bong Ho Son and Kalsbeek's *Contours of a Christian Philosophy* (1975) had formative influence, show us more of the impact of Dooyeweerd's project in South Korea. Adolfo García de la Sienra (1998, 2001), economist, logician and philosopher in Veracruz (Mexico), offered fruitful applications of Dooyeweerd's systematic philosophy in the field of economic theory (see Chapter 14). Bennie van der Walt (1999, 2003, 2010), a South African philosopher inspired by Dooyeweerd, draws attention to African perspectives on all kinds of social and societal questions, also in relation to the legacy of *apartheid*. Dooyeweerdian scholars active in Australasia include Alan Cameron (New Zealand) in legal theory and Bruce Wearne (Australia) in sociology.

More recently, Dooyeweerd's work has enjoyed interest from thinkers in the 'Global South'. They include Romel Bagares of the Philippines and Lay Hendra Wijaya of Indonesia. Perhaps the largest movement at present is in Brazil. Significant Brazilian scholars include Guilherme de Carvalho, Paulo Ribeiro, while the ABC2 network (*Associação Brasileira de Cristãos na Ciência*) has been established to focus on major questions in science and society. There and in other countries, Dooyeweerd's thinking is seen as a salutary and constructive framework for thinking about sustainable development, social issues and philosophical pluralism.

DEBATED THEMES

It would be a serious mistake to overlook conflicts that have flared up at times in the circle of Dooyeweerd's admirers. They may have caused distress, but one can also see them positively as evidence of the vitality of faith and scholarship and of a desire to engage with what has seized the world's attention. We will review just a few of the major themes that have been subjected to debate.

First, the *basic concepts*: in the 1950s, '60s and '70s, central concepts such as 'law', 'ground motive' and 'antithesis', and the elaboration of modal theory were much discussed. Dooyeweerd's distinction of four Western ground motives was criticised because of the underlying historical analysis. Discomfort with the terms 'law' and 'law idea' grew in some circles. Evolutionary science was vigorously in the ascendant. Dooyeweerd argued in discussion with evolutionary biologist Jan Lever that he saw no problem with the theory of evolution insofar as it concerns only the 'temporal process of becoming' and not creation or creation structures. All the same, seeds of doubt were sown. Some questioned whether laws are really so universal. Opposition

alighted in particular on the perceived association of the 'law' concept with rigidity and authority, with a distant God who is an absolute overlord. A decade later – in the '80s and '90s – the picture of a distant and authoritarian God was associated with male dominance and oppression of minorities. Wolterstorff, Hart and Olthuis (see Walsh et al., 1995) argued that Dooyeweerd's picture of God is one-sided, biased towards a divine sovereignty seen in those colours. As a result, the idea of creation order came to be associated with the exercise of power, rigid hierarchy, inaccessibility and exclusion. These criticisms, both in North America and the Netherlands, arose against the background of burgeoning feminism, postmodernism and deconstructivism in the academic world. Henk Geertsema has responded to some of them with his portrayal (1992) of God's creating acts as 'promise-commands to exist' and about 'creatureliness as responding'.

The association of law with rigidity had social significance too. It's seen, for example, in regard to *apartheid*, equal rights for men and women and (later still) the recognition of the rights of the LGBTQ+ community. Some said that the idea of 'creation order' functions to bolster an existing oppressive status quo. Tensions over this theme still run high now and then and have sometimes caused enduring estrangement between parties. Others, however, emphasise that Dooyeweerd's law idea actually points to meaningful responsiveness. Reality isn't just passive and indifferent 'matter'; it reacts to human intervention. That's because, since creation, 'something' that lies enclosed in reality gives to things and their mutual relationships a nature of their own. This is where Geertsema's expressions 'creation-as-response' and law as a 'promise-command to exist' come into play (Geertsema, 1992, Chapter 4).

Modal aspect theory is also debated, the sequence of aspects for example. That sequence is of great importance for Dooyeweerd because of the foundational role of earlier aspects for later ones and the power of disclosure associated with the later aspects over the earlier. Should the historical (formative) aspect perhaps be the first one? Calvin Seerveld (1980, 1985, 1995, 2001) offers reasons for placing the aesthetic aspect rather earlier in the list, immediately after the historical aspect. Willem Ouweneel (1986) thinks the sensitive modality needs to be split in two: a sensory and a sensitive one. These examples show that scholars who welcome what Dooyeweerd proposed come not only from his own field (philosophy of law) but from every academic faculty: mathematics, physics, biology, linguistics, medicine, psychology, economics, aesthetics and the social sciences. Actually, as we look back, we find no major branch of science in which there have been no scholars doing something with

Dooyeweerd's work, somewhere. In addition to the work of the thinkers already mentioned, we also think of publications by:

- Danie Strauss (2001, 2009) in mathematics;
- Dick Stafleu (1980, 1995) and Arnold Sikkema (2017) in physics;
- Jitse van der Meer (1996, 1997), Uko Zylstra (1992) and Jacob Klapwijk (2009) in biology;
- Pieter Verburg (1951, 1961) and Albert Weideman (2009) in linguistics;
- Henk Jochemsen, Gerrit Glas, Jan Hoogland and Sytse Strijbos in the fields of medical practice, psychiatry/psychology and medical ethics (Hoogland et al., 1995; Jochemsen & Glas, 1997; Glas, 2009, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c);
- Henk van Riessen (1971), Egbert Schuurman (2003, 2009, 2014), Sytse Strijbos (1988) and Maarten Verkerk, Jan Hoogland, Jan van der Stoep in the field of technology, management and industrial practices (Verkerk, 2004; Verkerk et al., 2016).

Another important elaboration of Dooyeweerd's ideas can be found in different forms of cultural analysis. We think of work by Sytse Zuidema (1972), Bob Goudzwaard (1976), Klaas Popma (1965), Henk van Riessen (1952), Johan van der Hoeven (1980, 1993), Jacob Klapwijk (Klapwijk et al., 1995) and others. Dooyeweerd's voice has engaged many hearers. That was so in the 1960s and '70s when European society was still significantly shaped by the Christian religion. But, more recently, this type of analysis has been directed to an audience that is searching for orientation and foothold in a secularising world (see Kuiper, 2009, 2011; Koyzis, 2019, 2024).

Dooyeweerd's legacy has also undergone a rather less visible outworking in confrontations with neo-Marxism, existential phenomenology, hermeneutical philosophy and postmodern thought. Johan van der Hoeven (1963) defended a dissertation on phenomenology, Lambert Zuidervaart on Theodor Adorno (1981), Jacob Klapwijk (1970) on Ernst Troeltsch, Sander Griffioen on Hegel (1976) and Henk Geertsema (1980) on Jürgen Moltmann. Sytse Zuidema (1948, 1960) wrote highly critical reflections on Sören Kierkegaard, Jean-Paul Sartre, Martin Heidegger and others. In recent decades, studies on postmodern and feminist thinkers such as Jacques Derrida, John Caputo, Luce Irigaray and Judith Butler are appearing at the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto and at Calvin University. In these diverse conversations, one detects a search for revitalisation of the neo-Calvinist tradition (see Smith, 2000, 2005, 2006; Olthuis, 1997, 2022). Zuidervaart (2016, 2017, 2023, 2024) adopts a stance of his own. In a 'post-truth' world, he pleads for communities where truth is 'lived'. He wants to see faithfulness to, and orientation towards, 'life-giving'

social principles. In that quest he takes up conversation not only with Adorno (his dissertation subject) and Dooyeweerd, but also with thinkers like Martin Heidegger, Hannah Arendt and Michel Foucault.

Finally, we return to the transcendental critique. Dooyeweerd wanted it to convince his opponents of the internal inconsistency of their starting points and to do so in the most honest way possible, using purely philosophical means. But his method is so radical, so idiosyncratic and, according to some, inconsistent, that in practice, few are convinced (see for an overview: Choi, 2000). There is something paradoxical in this, and even tragic. It's precisely the part of his philosophy that Dooyeweerd himself holds closest to his heart. He considers the transcendental critique more philosophical than anything in his oeuvre, yet it appears in practice to have convinced only a small minority of his supporters (A Level Deeper 11.1).

A LEVEL DEEPER

11.1 TRANSCENDENTAL CRITIQUE WAS NOT CONVINCING

Why such sparse approval for the transcendental critique? A significant factor is surely that when he wrote it, hardly any of Dooyeweerd's perceived opponents was still alive. Kantianism and even neo-Kantianism (see: A Level Deeper 5.1) were already in rapid decline in the mid-1930s. Philosophers no longer seemed susceptible to the kind of argumentation that Dooyeweerd used. It was borrowed from Kantianism: searching out the foundations of theoretical knowledge from within the boundaries of theoretical thought itself.

In addition – as we saw in Chapter 8 – Dooyeweerd's argument already presupposes all sorts of things that not everyone agreed on. The imagined opponent needs to start by agreeing with Dooyeweerd's ideas about the structure of theoretical thought. But those ideas were very abstract and certainly not beyond dispute. The opponent also had to share an understanding that all thought is intrinsically related to a true or a supposed Origin of meaning: that's not easy when one uses a term like 'origin' and even begins it with a capital letter. The term has a clear religious conno-

tation and therefore appears to introduce a presupposition (namely that all theoretical thought is religiously determined). But that's the very presupposition that the transcendental critique was intended to prove and could certainly not be assumed in advance. We saw (in Chapter 8) that Dooyeweerd's argument is a bit more subtle than that. But it didn't stop most critics from pushing back against Dooyeweerd on this point.

Whether this critique was justified or not, Dooyeweerd's thesis is still interesting. People today are not primarily convinced by logical argumentation, but more by the plausibility and consistency of the broader story.

TODAY: NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR DOOYEWEERD'S THINKING?

This brings us to the present day. Contrary to what Dooyeweerd himself expected, his philosophy remains a source of inspiration for many in the non-Western world, in countries such as Brazil, Mexico, Korea, the Philippines, Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand (Figure 11.1).

In Western countries, Dooyeweerd's criticism of scientism – absolutising the scientific approach to reality – enjoys undiminished relevance. The theory of aspects proves to be an appealing and accessible tool for students to gain insight into the complexity of reality. Dooyeweerd's social philosophy has long been influential in politics, not least in the research institutes of the Dutch Christian parties. Dooyeweerd's thinking offers – in the steps of Abraham Kuyper – a splendid answer to the philosophical pluralism of a postmodern culture. And in the last twenty-five years, a new offshoot has emerged: the normative analysis of professional practices (Chapter 12).

Dooyeweerd's work has now been almost entirely translated into English, and all the volumes of the journal *Philosophia Reformata*, of which Dooyeweerd was editor-in-chief until 1965, are available online. This journal is an important platform for the academic discussion of Dooyeweerd's legacy. Another extremely instructive source of information is the https://allofliferedeemed.co.uk/ website, maintained by Steve Bishop. Among digital sources of information one also finds Andrew Basden's 'Dooyeweerd Pages' (https://dooy.info/) as mentioned above; the online journal *Findings: A Journal of Reformational Thought* edited by Chris Gousmett, Alan Cam-

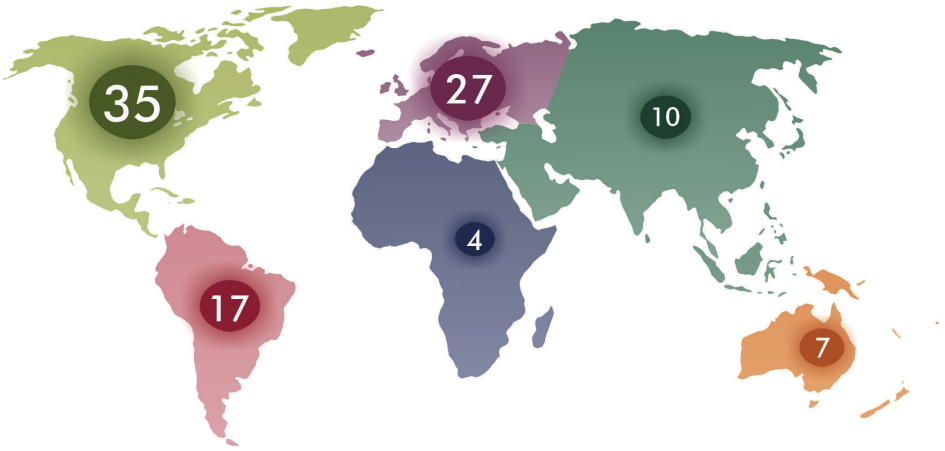

Figure 11.1 The global distribution of visitors to https://allofliferedeemed.co.uk/ gives an impression of current interest in Dooyeweerd's philosophy. From October 2023 to September 2024, the website was visited more than 12,000 times. The numbers in this figure show, for each continent, its percentage of the global total. ⏎

eron and Bruce Wearne; and recently the complete bibliography of Dooyeweerd on the website of the Neo-Calvinism Research Institute of the Theological University of Utrecht (https://sources.neocalvinism.org/dooyeweerd/).

Dooyeweerd studies are the subject of lively conferences around the world and regional networks exist for bringing Dooyeweerd's work into contact with current concerns and thinkers of our time. In the Netherlands, the journal *Sophie* is a most important medium for bringing his thinking to the attention of a wider public.

Despite these efforts, it isn't easy at the present time to bring the importance of Dooyeweerd's thinking to the fore. There are various reasons why. Prosperity, secularisation, the rise of visual culture and the role of social media are certainly not conducive to the kind of concentration that studying Dooyeweerd's work requires. Nevertheless, there is a deep desire for authenticity and the will to do things that matter in many people, especially young people. In Dooyeweerd's work, philosophical analysis is never an end in itself; it stands in the service of conversation and the sounding of the deepest human motivations. For precisely this reason, his thinking is still relevant.

PART II

APPLICATION

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WHAT IS NEEDED IS A COHERENT VIEW ON PROFESSIONS; ON THEIR SOCIETAL LEGITIMACY; ON THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF INDIVIDUAL PROFESSIONALS COMPARED [WITH] THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF OTHER STAKEHOLDERS; ON THE ROLE OF (SCIENTIFIC) KNOWLEDGE AND TECHNOLOGY. IDEALLY, THIS ACCOUNT SHOULD PROVIDE A PERSPECTIVE ON HOW MICRO-, MESO-, AND MACRO-CONTEXTS OF PROFESSIONALISM INTERSECT. IT SHOULD PROVIDE AN ORGANIZING IDEA, A PRINCIPLE, OR SET OF PRINCIPLES OR IDEAS TO GET A GRASP ON THE BEWILDERING MULTITUDE OF INSIGHTS, POINTS OF VIEW, CONTEXTS, AND NORMATIVE ISSUES WITH RESPECT TO THE PROFESSIONS. EXPERTISE SHOULD, IDEALLY, NO LONGER BE ONE-SIDEDLY DEFINED IN TERMS OF OUTCOME AND PERFORMANCE BUT INSTEAD BE CONCEIVED OF AS AN EXPRESSION OF INNER CONVICTION AND DEDICATION.

GERRIT GLAS

(2019b, p. 7)

12
PRACTICES

INTRO

In this chapter we outline the background and usefulness of what came later to be called the 'normative practice approach' or 'normative approach to practices'. The first steps towards this new approach were taken at the end of the 1980s by a group of Dutch physicians, scientists and philosophers who wondered what Dooyeweerd's philosophy might mean for medical practice and in particular for medical ethics. Their conversations should be set against a broader background: several philosophers of Christian inspiration were studying contemporary worldview pluralism, relativism and cultural diversity. They were affiliated with institutions like VU University (Amsterdam), the Institute for Christian Studies (Toronto), Calvin University (Grand Rapids) and Fuller Theological Seminary (Pasadena). Richard Mouw and Sander Griffioen, for example, wondered in *Pluralisms and Horizons* (1993) whether the increasing diversity in belief, worldview, behaviour and communal life – not only in a secularising Western society but also in the global world – has to be understood as a deviation from fixed, universal norms or as expression of legitimate pluralism. If we want to assess plurality more favourably, how would that fit in with the idea of a cosmic order with internal structural principles that underlie all of reality?

CONTEXT: PRINCIPLES ALONE ARE NOT ENOUGH

In a certain sense, medical ethics deals with the same question. Much is changing in medicine, particularly as medical technology and scientific knowledge gain influence. This growth of knowledge is explosive: it leads to constant growth of spe-

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cialisation in the medical professions. It also appears to be notoriously difficult to manage and contain the demands, ambitions and complexity of the current healthcare system, economically, logistically, legally and institutionally. This in turn affects the relationships between doctors, nurses, patients and other stakeholders. What's to be done with structural principles for medical (or nursing) action in such a rapidly changing practice? Do those principles really exist? And if they do, what good are they? Aren't they much too vague? Can they give enough support when we have to interpret them in concrete situations? Traditionally, Christian medical ethics was oriented towards theological principles. But what can we do nowadays with the commandment to love your neighbour and be merciful when one Christian takes a *pro-life* stance on the basis of these principles (no abortion, no euthanasia) and another is *pro-choice* ('yes' to both of them)?

These questions are not confined to Christian circles; they play a role in the broader society, especially with regard to so-called deontological ethics, whose roots go back to Immanuel Kant. How useful is 'patient autonomy' as an ethical principle when your patient lives in a delusional reality and is at risk of harming himself or others? And how meaningful is it to think in terms of universal principles when approving or rejecting high-tech practices, if the interactions between providers and users are strongly mediated by devices and programs for data transfer and by administrative and financial regulations? Do modern thinkers like Kant and Dooyeweerd, who focus on structure and universality, still have anything to say about our actions in late-modern reality?

CORE: DOOYEWEERD APPLIED TO PRACTICES

Those Christian doctors, scientists and philosophers we mentioned earlier sensed that a stronger, more practical and context-sensitive story was needed. That stronger story has taken on the form of a normative (or norm-responsive) approach to practice. The story has three parts corresponding with three dimensions (see Figure 12.1). Needless to say, these dimensions are not separable components or parts but fully intertwined intrinsic dimensions of the meshwork of interactions that form a practice.

First is the *structural dimension* of a practice that makes it possible to know we're looking, for example, at a medical practice and not a law firm. Three kinds of principles can be distinguished in it, and two of them we know from Chapter 7: its quali-

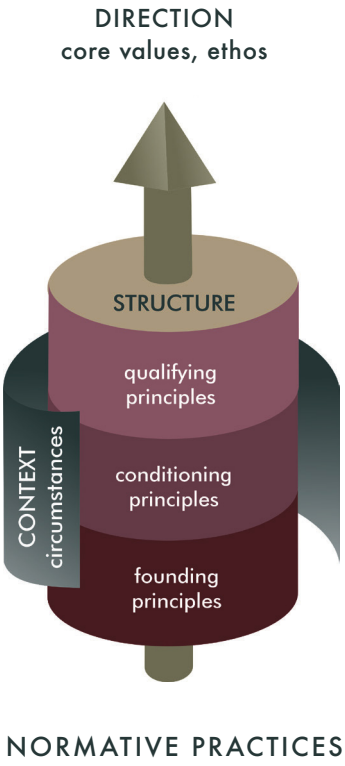

Figure 12.1 To understand professional practices, we must distinguish three dimensions in them: structure, context and direction. The *structure* itself also reveals three important elements in its characterisation: qualifying principles, conditioning principles and foundational principles. The *context* refers in particular to the social and organisational environment in which the practice takes shape. The *direction* is determined by the dispositions, ethos, core values and fundamental beliefs of those involved. These beliefs play a regulatory role in realising the goals of the practice in question. ⏎

fying and foundational principles. The designers of the normative approach to practices proposed that a third kind needs to be recognised: conditioning (or condition-determining) principles. Together these three kinds of principles build the structure, the 'constitutive side' of a practice. They make the professional practice possible.

The second dimension (one that demands much more attention) is the *context* in which different professional practices develop. That isn't just the social context; it's about the embedding of professional practices in other, broader practices and about the collaboration between professionals (and their organisations) and the government, insurance companies and other funding agencies, professional organisations, advocacy groups, the legal system, the healthcare inspectorate and supervisory bodies.

And then, the last dimension: the *direction* of a practice. We are thinking here of core values, deeper motives and fundamental convictions that shape the daily course of events in a practice. In this new approach, direction is also referred to as the 'regulatory side' of the practice.

In Chapter 10, thinking about being human, we said that structure and direction presuppose each other: there is no structure without direction and no direction without structure. We find this relationship again in the normative practice approach where structure and direction are intimately and explicitly linked and intertwined with the contextual dimension.

ELABORATION: NORMATIVE PRACTICES AND RESPONSIVENESS

Before moving on, we should call to mind that Dooyeweerd's idea of creation order isn't a cosmic blueprint that floats over reality like a divine architect's plan. Earlier chapters already made this point. Ordinances exist indeed, but they lie enclosed 'in' creatures. They don't stand above reality as separate enforcing agencies; they participate in that reality. When Dooyeweerd talks about laws, orders, structure and principles, he is thinking of realities that have holding power for creation – but can't be captured in formulae and rules. In Dooyeweerd's terminology: the law of God eludes human definition. That sounds negative and somewhat vague, but Dooyeweerd means something positive by it, namely that God has a purpose with the world He created – a purpose that is prefigured and embedded in the very structure of reality – but at the same time gives humans a great deal of freedom to express that purpose in their own way.

Reality is therefore responsive, it has an 'answering character', to use Henk Geertsema's term. People can develop antennae for this responsiveness. You can go against God's intentions with creation, but sooner or later you land on the rocks. To put that in positive terms, there are rewards for those who have developed a feeling for that responsiveness. Things fall into place; insight increases and the things you undertake succeed. The idea of creation order therefore points to an intrinsic normativity, to the responses of reality to human action, to the norm-sensitive character of human relationships.

So, back to the late eighties, when our concerned physicians, ethicists and philosophers were wondering how medical ethics could also plug into the basic ideas of reformational philosophy. Are doctor-patient and nurse-patient relationships also characterised by intrinsic normativity? If so, how can they be analysed in view of the multitudinous relationships in which the doctor–patient contact is embedded? The first draft of the normative practice approach took Dooyeweerd's analysis of

social relations (Chapter 7) as a starting point for the analysis of the doctor-patient relationship.

STRUCTURE: CONSTITUTIVE SIDE

The start was an easy one. The doctor–patient relationship responds to foundational and qualifying principles. What *qualifies* it is beneficence, the ethical aspect, the intention to do well for the patient, the altruistic and disinterested way in which care is provided for people having difficulties with their physical and/or mental health. The *foundation* for the doctor–patient relationship is laid in the long historical development from which a vast amount of knowledge and expertise has been distilled; the formative aspect, therefore. We added to this pair of principles the so-called *conditioning* principles. These involve, among others, the economic and institutional agreements, the legal rules that doctors and nurses have to comply with, and the control of the logistic system

But now it all gets a bit trickier: how should we think about the rapidly changing societal, educational and institutional *context* in which the doctor–patient relationship takes shape? What impact do these changes have on how the three types of principles are disclosed and relate to one another? Think not only of the impressive technical and scientific advances, but also of the changes in the economic, legal and institutional frameworks underlying current healthcare systems. Or consider the increasing demands with respect to the logistical, administrative and data infrastructure. Or think of the effects of cultural changes on the morale of doctors and nurses. How do the qualifying, conditioning and foundational principles relate to these kinds of changes?

The authors of the normative approach recognised that these and other contingencies not only impact on all three dimensions of healthcare's constitutive side but even affect the concept of a practice as such. This concept no longer only involves doctors, nurses and patients, but also people with other responsibilities, such as local and national authorities, administrators, suppliers of materials, healthcare inspectors, insurance companies, housing corporations, advocacy groups and so on. As 'stakeholders', they are all asked to facilitate face-to-face healthcare from their particular perspective, based on a well-defined responsibility. But the cooperation between all these people and the finetuning of their respective responsibilities appears to be a critical issue.

The normative practice approach tries to tackle this complexity by making use of the theory of aspects to qualify the relationships between the actors just mentioned.

The legal relationship between doctor and patient primarily responds to juridical norms. The funding of healthcare obeys economic norms. Institutional changes relate to social norms. Logistics, administration and data infrastructure are initially determined by laws that are physical, formative and/or logical, but ultimately function in interactions that are legally, economic, socially or morally qualified. The normative practice approach takes a next step by distinguishing between different types of norms: qualifying, conditioning and foundational norms. These norms not only regulate the behaviour of doctors and nurses but, in fact, of all stakeholders. The distinction between the three types of norms is relevant to create order in the fine-tuning of responsibilities between parties. Conditioning or foundational principles must never adopt the role of qualifying principles in the relation between doctor and patient. A good doctor is not a good doctor just because she works so efficiently (economic norm) or because she is so skilled technically (foundational norm). The efficiency and technical skills are at the service of the qualifying norm of doing well to the patient. More on this in Chapter 16.

What characterises our time is, above all, the complex interweaving of all the interactions and processes just mentioned. With logistics, administration and data infrastructure, for example, we initially think of calculating tools, spreadsheets, diagrams and flowcharts. These instruments play a mediating role with respect to the financial accountability and the administration of the company or hospital. They make use of a technical infrastructure that is mainly determined by databases and tools for data processing. This administration seems a world in itself, but issues with privacy, administrative reliability and (financial) accountability show that their meaning can only be understood from the broader context of healthcare delivery. This context requires stringent demands with an eye on privacy, reliability, trustworthiness and social accountability.

CONTEXT: PRACTICES ARE RELATIONAL

Is this refinement in the analysis of the structure of practices really going to solve our problems? Does it give us a better grasp of normativity in those practices? Richard Mouw and Sander Griffioen doubt it (Mouw & Griffioen, 1993). They think the scheme of structure and direction is too simple; it needs to be supplemented by another dimension: context.

To understand this, we must first go back a step. The core question is: how do we find our orientation in times of great cultural, technological and social changes?

How do we relate to the plurality of beliefs? How do we know what's good in complex, specialised practices? In principle, according to Mouw and Griffioen, there are three directions in which the answer can be sought.

We can try to sharpen the sensitivity of our worldview antennae, so they pick up signals more readily from others. They need to discover, for example, what is laudable in the beliefs of others and become more aware of our own limitations. That sort of approach leads to greater nuance and a less antithetical stance towards other life orientations. It is a solution that focuses on *direction*, that is to say on deepest motivations, convictions and worldviews. We will discuss this in the next section.

We can also try to adjust the templates we use for assessing what is going on around us. Such attempts focus on *structure*. An example of such a refinement can be found in the previous section, where we described the complicated interplay of the whole range of condition-determining norms or factors.

Finally, we might also start to think differently about the *context*, about the cultural-historical process of change itself. For example, we could learn to see cultural plurality as a positive characteristic that is inherent in creation itself. The many ways in which humanity responds culturally to fundamental existential challenges thus become expressions of a potential and wealth that are inherent in creation. Mouw and Griffioen want us to compare this wealth with the different facets of a diamond. To appreciate this pluralism and diversity requires cultural and contextual sensitivity, which doesn't arise automatically but must be nurtured 'under an open sky'. Without this open perspective, attention all too easily becomes fixated on only one facet of a particular development and things are easily taken out of context. An orientation towards what lies beyond, the larger whole, therefore helps to keep us aware of the bigger picture, to remain inclusive and avoid unnecessary contradictions – in short, continue to see the diamond as a whole.

These considerations are important for thinking about practices. Practices develop in a cultural context in which the interactions between professionals and the parties they deal with are constantly changing. The relationships between government and education, government and healthcare, and healthcare and business are not static. We know them by the range of agreements to which they commit themselves and from which they derive their legitimacy (the 'social contract', Chapter 16). Changes in the interactions between parties will always have to be weighed from the perspective of the larger whole (the open sky) in order to gain an idea of their influence on the practice in question. We, as authors, are aware that this weighing occurs in a world full of tensions; tensions that may threaten the very notion of a so-

cial contract. There are situations in which professionals (and professional organisations) have to stand up against the 'spirit of their time', for instance when they are forced to legitimise and facilitate improper or even antinormative behaviour of governments, funding agencies or other parties. Think of what one would do when a dictatorial regime would require one, as psychiatrist, to medically legitimise the imprisonment of activists or protesters against the regime, like in the former Soviet Union. Or, how one would behave as member of the board of a university when funding agencies and/or the government would force universities to develop and sustain practices that would violate academic core values.

DIRECTION: THE SOUL RETURNS

What is becoming increasingly clear is the insight that professional practices are created through the efforts of real people, human beings of flesh and blood with their own backgrounds and ideals. People do it all for something, they live for a certain cause, they dedicate themselves to solving injustice, suffering, illness, deprivation and poverty. Practices only come to life when inspired people give them shape with their own ideas of what is good and important.

In Dooyeweerd's vision, ground motives refer to fundamental principles and deep inspirations in society (Chapter 3). The 'ethos' of a practice is more concrete than a ground motive: it's about attitudes, purposes and ideals. It is the outworking of ground motives in a certain practice. So, the direction of a care practice is not an abstract or lofty ideal, but is embodied and shaped in attitudes, purposes and ideals. Because that direction partly 'regulates' the behaviour of the employees, we also speak of the regulatory side of a practice. The term 'ethos' harks back to the ancient Greek *ēthos*, which means 'habit' or 'character'. In this model it refers to the character and virtues of the professionals in a practice. They bring 'soul' into a practice.

We might simplify the above by comparing normative practices to a house. There's a foundation (knowledge and expertise as the basic principle). There's a roof that makes it possible to live in it (the qualifying principle). Inside the house there are walls and rooms designed in such a way that they make what happens in that room possible (conditioning principles). One room is set up for cooking, another room is suitable for relaxing. But the house only really becomes a home when it is inhabited, when real people live in it. Then the house gets direction, a soul.

EVALUATION AND CRITIQUE

It took some time for the relevance of the normative practice approach to be seen. But, over time it eventually received the attention it deserves, notably in different professions and in thinking about different kinds of governance. It has now been applied, to name just a few areas, in healthcare, education, technology, public administration, international relations, development cooperation, agriculture and in military contexts.

From the start, the risk was that what was intended as an approach, or a way of thinking, was nevertheless perceived as a model or even as a static blueprint. Other objections have been that the approach and terminology were too abstract and difficult. In consequence, one of the authors of this book have also worked with the Triple 'I' approach (A Level Deeper 12.1). The latter approach was developed in close collaboration with professionals from various disciplines.

A LEVEL DEEPER

12.1 THE TRIPLE 'I' MODEL

The Triple 'I' Model (Verkerk, 2014) can be seen as a variant of the normative practices approach developed for organisations (Figure 12.2). The three 'I's refer to three perspectives that characterise professional practices.

The first 'I' relates to their structure and refers to the Identity and intrinsic values of professional practices. The identity of a healthcare practice is characterised, for example, by 'caring'. Everything that is done in this practice is directed towards the health and wellbeing of the patient. In Dooyeweerdian terminology, caring is what qualifies the healthcare practice (its qualifying function). It is subject to a moral norm. That norm is embodied in the behaviour of professionals. As a result, the behaviour acquires intrinsic value. We can think of empathy, involvement, altruism and caring. Identity and intrinsic values are two sides of the same coin: they presuppose each other. On the one hand, intrinsic values make the identity of a practice concrete, and on the other hand, the totality of the values forms the identity of a practice.

TRIPLE 'I' MODEL

Figure 12.2 The Triple 'I' Model provides a simplified representation of the normative practices approach. It is a layer or shell model in which the normative practice is central at the top, surrounded by a layer of stakeholders and a layer that represents society as a whole. The arrows show the interactions between the three levels: they influence each other. ⏎

The second 'I' relates to the legitimate **Interests** of stakeholders who influence a professional practice: its **context**. Using once more the example of healthcare, there is a specific network of stakeholders or involved parties in healthcare provision. Important stakeholders are insurance companies, patient organisations, professional associations and governments. Each party attends to its own legitimate interests. It's a legitimate interest of insurers, for example, to provide good care at a reasonable price. A legitimate interest of patient organisations is that patients are involved in making choices (**shared decision making**). A legitimate interest of the working professionals is that they are given sufficient time for continuing professional training. We note that the concept of 'legitimate interests' has a normative charge.

The third 'I' refers to the **Ideals** and fundamental beliefs in society that bear upon healthcare practice for better or worse and relates to its **direction**. Such ideals and beliefs are also correctly called a **zeitgeist** (or spirit of the age). An example is the concept of 'patient autonomy'. So, for example, in Europe today, the idea has become increasingly important (part of the **zeitgeist**) that every individual is autonomous. This idea has seeped inexorably into healthcare practices. It has brought about the legally enshrined obligation to obtain from patients explicit consent for treatment.

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AS I PUBLISHED PAPERS ON HOW DOOYEWEERD'S PHILOSOPHY COULD BE APPLIED IN PRACTICE, I NOTICED THAT I COULD APPLY DOOYEWEERD'S IDEAS TO ALL AREAS OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS IN WHICH I WAS INVOLVED.

ANDREW BASDEN

(2018, p. XX)

13
NATURAL SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

INTRO

How do the natural sciences work? How do you design a good lathe or robot? What would bring about a just and sustainable food system? How should a solid foundation for modern information and communication technology (ICT) be laid? How should you organise a humane factory? What is the influence of technology on society as a whole? What makes technology meaningful? Questions of this kind regularly confront engineers. In this chapter we show how Dooyeweerd's philosophy has helped many natural scientists and engineers to tackle them.

RESEARCH IN NATURAL SCIENCE

In his book *Theories at Work* (1987), Dick Stafleu develops a philosophy of natural science based on the history of classical physics. He uses three basic distinctions important to Dooyeweerd. First, there is the distinction between laws or norms and whatever is subject to them (Chapter 4). The purpose of science is to investigate those laws. Second, there is the distinction between modal aspects and things. Aspects are universal modes of existence (Chapter 4), and things are concrete objects, phenomena or social structures (Chapters 6 and 7). The third distinction is between the irreducibility of the various aspects and their mutual coherence (Chapters 4 and 5).

With these distinctions as his foundation, Stafleu elucidates four different directions in natural scientific research. The first direction is the search for what Stafleu calls objectivity or mathematisation. This means that natural phenomena are represented in earlier aspects, perhaps as diagrams or in mathematical equations. He

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finds that natural science is disclosed in that way by retrocipations to earlier aspects such as the numerical, spatial and kinematic aspects (Chapter 5). We see that whenever scientists devise a way to measure something.

The second direction is the search for applications by looking into later aspects. Natural scientists and engineers invent instruments for scientific research and products for people and the community. Those instruments and products arise from study of a particular aspect but must be tailored to real-world applications and users. Telescopes and X-ray plates are paradigmatic examples. Or take spectacles; they are technical aids consisting of physical materials assembled in such a way that people can see better with them (anticipation of the sensitive aspect), that they look good as a product in use (anticipation of the aesthetic aspect) and they contribute to care for the wearer (anticipation of the moral aspect). So, in sum: as you search for applications, you will cast your eye over all the modal aspects by taking account of anticipations from the physical-chemical aspect (Chapter 5).

The third direction is the search for universality within a particular aspect. The search for general, universally valid laws has been inspired by researchers who are confident that the unity of nature lies within nature itself and is not an imposition. Stafleu demonstrates that this has been a particularly fruitful search – epitomised by

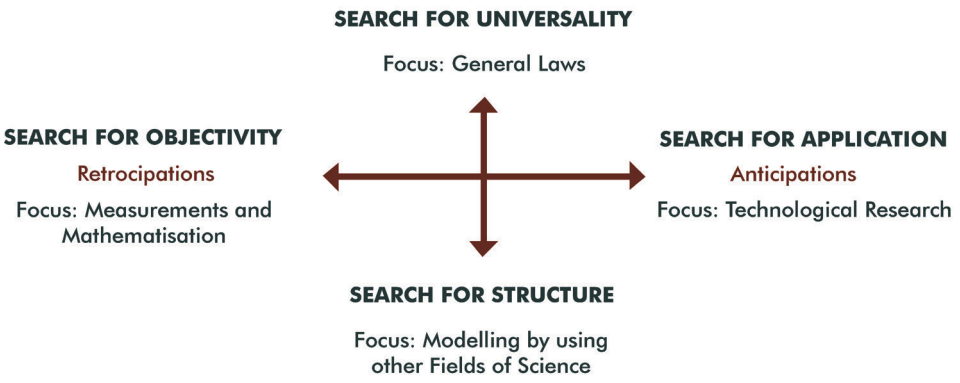

Figure 13.1 Stafleu distinguishes four directions of research: (1) Search for objectivity: representation in mathematical formulae, (2) Search for application: technological designs, (3) Search for universality: unifying laws, and (4) Search for structure: using knowledge from other parts of science.

Galileo's and Newton's laws of motion. A Dooyeweerdian approach also shows, for example, that the physical aspect cannot be reduced to the kinematic aspect (Chapter 4) – as has been realised by physicists attempting to connect Newtonian dynamics to thermodynamics.

The fourth direction is the search for structure. In this approach, other fields of science are used to model, to understand and to develop a theory for a specific phenomenon or problem. To explain it, we suggest a better-known example than Stafleu discusses. The physicist Rutherford is known as the founding father of the atomic model. Atoms consist of positively charged nuclei around which negatively charged electrons orbit. In designing this model, Rutherford was inspired by knowledge of our solar system: planets that revolve around the sun. But atomic theory has also had to draw upon understanding of electric charges, subatomic forces and quantum phenomena. In this fourth direction, the relationship between theory and experiment is central and models have a key role in it.

In each of these directions of scientific progress, analogies or patterns are discerned which are not merely contrived. They are discoveries of deep order in reality. In particular, Stafleu says that we should not be surprised at the 'unreasonable' effectiveness of mathematics in the natural sciences (as physicist Eugene Wigner put it in 1959): Dooyeweerd's framework leads us to expect it.

LATHES AND ROBOTS

Henk van Riessen was the first philosopher to address the reality of machinery in factories. He gave an extensive analysis of the lathe in his dissertation *Filosofie en techniek* (1949). He uses both 'modal aspect theory' and 'thing theory' (Chapters 4, 5 and 6) and asserts that you can only learn to understand a lathe by using it. Not only the lathe itself should be in view, but also the craftsman, the workpiece and the energy source. The entire context must be taken into account. Van Riessen demonstrates that a lathe functions in all modal aspects: in the earliest aspects as a subject and in the later ones as an object (Chapters 4 and 5). He points out the importance of the disclosure process: in the design of the lathe, the first aspects are disclosed or concretised by the later aspects (Chapter 5). Van Riessen calls the lathe a 'technical operator', because energy transformation takes place in it. The lathe is designed in such a way that it transmutes energy into a workpiece with the desired technical form.

Maarten Verkerk, Jan Hoogland, Jan van der Stoep and Marc de Vries provide an extensive analysis of an industrial robot in *Philosophy of Technology* (2016). They discuss all aspects of the robot systematically and show how its functions in the earlier aspects are disclosed by those in later ones (Chapters 4 and 5). They point out the importance of the qualifying function in that disclosure by comparing an industrial robot with a surgical robot (Chapter 6). An industrial robot is qualified by the formative aspect and a surgical robot by the moral aspect. To provide a better characterisation of the identity of a robot, they introduce the concept of the 'working function'. The function of a robot that moves components around the factory is characterised by the kinematic aspect and that of a robot that welds two parts together by the physical aspect.

Verkerk et al. also provide a detailed analysis of the relationships between a robot and its modules (composite components), the modules and their parts, and the parts and their materials. They also investigate the relationship between an individual robot and the production line of which the robot is part. In doing so, they provide an application and further elaboration of Dooyeweerd's theory of whole-part relationships and enkaptic intertwining (Chapter 6).

It turns out that engineers and students of engineering enjoy the discovery that there is more between heaven and earth than the physical and technical aspects they know from a scientistic training. Engineers fruitfully apply the theory of modal aspects and of individuality structures. We refer, among others, to Strijbos & Basden (2006), Harmsen, De Haan & Swinkels (2018), Basden (2019), Brue, Schuurman & Vanderleest (2022) and Zambroni de Souza, Verkerk & Ribeiro (2022).

AGRICULTURE AND LIVESTOCK FARMING

How do you achieve a fair and sustainable food system? At first sight, the question is unanswerable. After all, the food system is enormously complex. There are various actors, multiple driving forces, all kinds of different activities and the number of products can scarcely be imagined. However, Henk Jochemsen and Corné Rademaker (2019b) argue that you can think sensibly about this question by using the practices approach (Chapter 12).

They start their analysis with the statement that agriculture and livestock farming are indeed normative practices. It's an obvious proposition when seen from the practices approach. If you work in an environment where technological and eco-

nomic considerations predominate, such a proposition is powerful in rhetorical terms. It immediately raises the question of which norms play a role. And if you can answer that question convincingly, an opening arises to discuss different types of norms and weigh them against each other.

Jochemsen and Rademaker explain that two layers should be distinguished in agricultural practice. The first layer is the setting of agricultural practice within the economic sector, where it is subject to economic norms; the second layer is that of agricultural activities themselves, where, alongside those economic norms, moral norms (e.g. maintaining biodiversity and promoting animal welfare) also matter. Identifying multiple layers in a practice is meaningful because each of them has a relative independence. That simplifies the discovery of relevant norms or types of norms.

Professionals and engineers widely use the practices approach. Jan Huijgen, farmer and philosopher, is strongly inspired by the normative practice model (Huijgen, 2005; Postuma & Van der Ziel, 2008). He emphasises the importance of faith and philosophy for developing a vision on agriculture and for thinking through ethical questions. He also finds it important that agricultural companies are well embedded in the local context. He has actively shaped his philosophy in his own farm: the Eemlandhoeve (https://eemlandgoed.nl/). De Vries and Jochemsen's book, *The Normative Nature of Social Practices and Ethics in Professional Environments* (2019), contains contributions on the process industries, on civil engineering and on weapons technology among other things. The practices approach is shown there to be a useful tool for engineers in understanding their own practices and identifying the normative moments in them. At the same time, we see that the specific characteristics of different practices demand an adjustment or expansion of the philosophical toolbox.

FOUNDATIONS OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Andrew Basden (2018) sets the bar particularly high in his book, *The Foundations of Information Systems: Research and Practice*. He wants not only to provide tools for developing information and communications technology in a responsible way, but also to lay a solid foundation for conducting research into ICT.

Basden considers five different matters: the nature of ICT, its use, its functions, the relationship between ICT and society, and the development of ICT. For each of them, he catalogues, analyses, evaluates and critiques the contributions of his col-

leagues to lay down a foundation for their own special fields. At the same time, he shows that the task requires not only specialist knowledge but also a broader insight into the relationship between technology, people and society. And to gain that broader insight, he brings almost all of Dooyeweerd's distinctions and theories to the table. Here and there, he uses the work of Dooyeweerd's students (Schuurman, Clouser) or of other philosophers (Heidegger, Foucault).

In introducing Dooyeweerd's philosophy, for example, Basden starts with everyday or naïve experience (Chapter 2) and with the concept of meaning (Chapter 1). We see these concepts recurring constantly in his development of foundations for the ICT field. He insists that engineers working to develop ICT ought to pay great attention to the everyday experiences of people using these technologies. That everyday experience is emphasised as a source of knowledge in the development of meaningful ICT.

HUMANE FACTORIES

Maarten Verkerk raises the question of humane factories in his dissertation, *Trust and Power on the Shop Floor* (2004). Van Riessen (1952) had previously expressed his concerns about the treatment of workers in the 'labour market'. He believed that a 'labour dictatorship' and 'labour slavery' existed in the business world. For Verkerk, the question of the humanity of labour was also an existential question: he managed factories for many years and was responsible for designing new ones.

Verkerk lays out two dominant paradigms. The older one was developed by Frederick Taylor, an American engineer. He proposed the subdivision of manufacturing processes into a large number of small operations, each of which should be carried out with maximum efficiency. Each operator should only have to perform a single task. And management should be organised likewise: each manager must focus on just one aspect of management. At first, the Taylorist approach led to a tremendous increase in efficiency. But side-effects piled up rapidly: high absenteeism, fear, distrust and alienation. In short: dehumanisation.

The accidental discovery of a new working method at a coal mine at Elsecar in South Yorkshire in England led to the birth of a new paradigm. The core of this new paradigm is that you split a production process into the fewest possible coherent operations and that the operators can perform many management functions. It was called the 'participatory' or 'democratic approach'. In the Netherlands, this

paradigm was worked out into a new design method: socio-technical system design. Research showed that the new paradigm not only improved efficiency and quality but also led to a reduction in absenteeism, an increase in involvement and better labour relations.

Dooyeweerd's philosophy doesn't offer a theory of factory design. But it certainly shows why Taylorism was so destructive: its factories were designed on the basis of one-sidedly economic values. At the same time, it shows why the new paradigm is more humane: the design does justice to other aspects of being human, including the psychological, social and moral aspects.

FREEDOM AND CONTROL

In *The Society of the Future* (1952), Van Riessen offers his analysis of the development of society. He points to the tremendous shifts in power that are brought about under the influence of science and technology. First, he signals the rise of organisational hierarchies that restrict employee freedom in favour of power at the top. Then, he points to the heavy concentration of power in the economic sector, undermining the freedom of other societal associations. He acutely observes the emergence of new elites from the world of management or administration, increasingly seeking political power. Finally, he anticipates that heavy pressure will be exerted on religion (Christian religion) to adapt itself to these developments and to provide these elites with religious support. The upshot of all these changes, according to Van Riessen, would be to usher in a totalitarian society of socialist (communist) stripe.

Van Riessen applies the theory of ground motives (Chapter 3) to this development. He views the humanist mind as characterised by a tension between freedom and control, and in his view – the year is 1952 – the control motive is firmly in charge and threatening human freedom. Van Riessen thinks that this evolution can only be redirected if technology is managed in accordance with the Christian ground motive of creation, fall and redemption.

Similarly, Sytse Strijbos advises in his dissertation, *Het technische wereldbeeld* (1988), that we shouldn't only be looking at technology itself but also pay attention to the underlying image of a world that is infinitely susceptible to technical manipulation. In his opinion, the image has the character of a worldview, driven by the control motive: the ambition to get reality entirely within human grasp, aided and abetted by science and technology.

MEANING IN TECHNOLOGY

In his dissertation, *Techniek en toekomst* (1972) (*Technology and the Future* (2009)), Egbert Schuurman emphasises reality-as-meaning in line with Dooyeweerd (Chapter 1). He connects the notion of meaning in technology with the concept of disclosure (Chapter 5). In his view, radical choices must be made for the disclosure of technology. They are religious choices. First of all, technology can be shaped in such a way that it does justice to the norms inherent to God's creation. In that case, the development of technology will be meaningful. But the possibility must be faced that humankind will resist those divine norms and want to determine autonomously which norms it finds relevant. In that case, the development of a meaningful technology will be perverted or distorted.

Schuurman subjects the perversion and distortion of technology to extensive analysis. He criticises the way in which it is developed when economic norms are given overriding control. 'Turning a profit' leads to the neglect of legitimate interests of customers, employees and governments. Technology may also be designed to enhance the grip of government or the business community on citizens. In the most extreme case this may culminate in forms of dictatorship or tyranny. Another dangerous development may also occur when technology is presented as a neutral instrument and is therefore no longer tested against norms.

Schuurman emphasises that a liberating perspective can only be achieved if the development of technology is guided by a number of non-technical norms. The physical and formative aspects ought to be disclosed by linguistic, social, economic, aesthetic, legal, ethical and religious norms. In his *Faith and Hope in Technology*, Schuurman (2003) describes technology as a cultural science: engineers are called to contribute to the flourishing of culture and society.

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THE FRUGAL MANNER OF ADMINISTERING SCARCE THINGS IN THEIR ALTERNATIVE DESTINATION FOR THE SATISFACTION OF HUMAN NEEDS [...] IS DIRECTED BY LOVE TOWARDS OUR NEIGHBOUR.

HERMAN DOOYEWEERD
(*NC*, II, p. 153)

THE ECONOMIC ASPECT CAN BE UNDERSTOOD AS AN INDISPENSABLE LINK IN A FUNDAMENTAL MULTIFACETED NORMATIVITY, WHICH REQUIRES SIMULTANEOUS REALISATION IN EVERY CONCRETE SITUATION.

TJALLING PIETER VAN DER KOOY
(1964, p. 15)

14
ECONOMICS

INTRO

How should we think about businesses, the market and scarcity? What is the future of labour and labour relations? How should the principle of efficiency be implemented so as not to become an end in itself? How do we organise a sustainable and innovative market economy on a global scale? This chapter discusses the core ideas of a number of economists who have been inspired by Dooyeweerd's philosophy.

CRITIQUE OF CLASSICAL ECONOMICS

We start at the beginning. The question has been raised as to whether Dooyeweerd's thinking about economics and the economic aspect was not overly influenced by (neo)classical views on economics. The basic idea of the classical approach is that economic processes are determined by people's needs and by the scarcity of goods that can satisfy these needs. In this view, the market is the set of relationships that arise when people acquire the goods they need through exchange or payment. (Neo) classical economics sees itself as an empirical science that does not make normative judgements about the nature of needs and the purpose of economic transactions. Prices are determined by consumers' needs and by producers' pursuit of profit.

Critics believe that Dooyeweerd has stuck too closely to this approach by starting out with the same set of core ideas. As a concept, isn't scarcity too limited and too neutral? Shouldn't economics be primarily about wellbeing and human flourishing? Does Dooyeweerd's approach offer sufficient resistance to undesirable forms of efficiency thinking, in which efficiency becomes an end in itself?

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It is not so difficult to refute this criticism. Just look at the quote at the beginning of this chapter, which states that the 'administering' of 'scarce things' must be determined by love for one's neighbour. Dooyeweerd advocates a normative view of the economy and of economics as a science. The economic aspect is a norm-responsive aspect. It is linked to all other aspects and is disclosed by later aspects such as the moral and the faith aspect. Economic relations and processes are no more an end in themselves than are prosperity, money or economic growth. They are indispensable elements of a well-functioning society, and they serve the disclosure of human relations in all sectors of society: education, housing, energy supply, industry, safety, care, agriculture and the management of the living environment.

In fact, according to Dooyeweerd, human society is determined by underlying spiritual motives. He speaks mostly about the nature-freedom motive (Chapter 3) that has our civilisation in its grip. Economic prosperity has become an end in itself. Our lives and our future must be controllable and that will work out best if we have enough to spend and are able to control this spending. Market thinking has come to be a guiding principle in many sectors. In a global context, the urge to control and the absolutising of the economic perspective have led to social injustice and irresponsible exploitation of natural resources.

AN EXAMPLE: THE CALCULATING CITIZEN

Classical economic theory takes for granted the well-heeled economic citizen who makes economic choices on rational grounds. But that typical economic citizen becomes a deceptive abstraction when we think of an unemployed, addicted psychiatric patient with debts or of the average citizen in a developing nation. Neither of those arouses economic interest. They have nothing to invest, their economic contribution does not count in the bigger picture, they fall by the wayside when it comes to the distribution of goods, and they can only survive in a reality outside the market economy.

Critique of the economic citizen as a starting assumption is widely shared. Still, it's a starting point that shapes the relationships between people in all kinds of ways, in their own nations and also internationally. In many Western countries, market thinking has a considerable influence on the organisation of healthcare. There's a proliferation of private providers that focus on relatively wealthy citizens, who suffer less illnesses and have more and better resources at their disposal. These are fa-

voured (fewer waiting lists, more facilities) over their economically less interesting, chronically ill and care-dependent neighbours.

International relations are also largely determined by the principles of the market economy. The result is distorted growth, injustice and exclusion. In relations with developing countries, systemic injustice and exploitation result from the more profitable manufacturing of high-quality goods in the West (or China), while developing countries only get paid for the raw materials and cheap labour they provide. Dooyeweerd would say that such distortion and exclusion come about because overriding importance is ascribed to the economic perspective. This perspective is, in other words, absolutised.

SEEK BREADTH AND BALANCE: SIMULTANEOUS REALISATION OF NORMS

Economists have dealt with Dooyeweerd's legacy in very different ways. In itself, that isn't so surprising, given what we said about it in Chapter 11. But what really interests us is how the writers' context, professional background, social situation and religiously inspired values have led to divergent emphases. A common thread in all the differences is the critique of reductionism in economics and of distorted social developments that are based on exalting the economic perspective as unchallengeable and absolute.

A striking example is Tjalling Pieter van der Kooy (1902-1992). He occupied a chair in economics at VU University and held a high position in the Dutch government. Van der Kooy was inspired by the work of Dooyeweerd but doesn't regard himself as part of the 'inner circle'. In later life he even distances himself somewhat. He has reservations about Dooyeweerd's 'law idea'. And he finds the elaboration of modal theory too technical and abstract. One might think his assimilation of Dooyeweerd's thinking is superficial when looked at from a distance. But that demeans his contribution. Van der Kooy introduced a term that is directly based on Dooyeweerd's oeuvre, which would come to play a significant role in economic science and politics: 'simultaneous realisation of norms' (Van der Kooy, 1964, 1971). The term exacts more from economic science than a mere interest in the economic aspect. It suggests that economics needs to focus on the broader coherence of all the aspects. They must be developed side by side and be respected equally. The same goes for economic practice. This practice is embedded within a broader social real-

ity. Good economists will take the full breadth of social life into their purview and seek to equilibrate economic and other socially relevant aspects in the development of economic life. Van der Kooy has legal, ethical, aesthetic, social and technical aspects in mind. What matters is the whole complex of aspects, the balance between them and the direction of the development.

GROUNDS FOR HOPE: NORMATIVE PRINCIPLES ARE REAL

The term 'simultaneous realisation of norms' has been a key concept in many discussions. It found its way into vision papers and policy documents, statements of party-political principles and scientific literature. It is referred to with approval by Jan Peter Balkenende and Govert Buijs in their recent *Capitalism Reconsidered* (2023, p. 147).

Those authors point to much that is profoundly amiss in our economy. Our orientation is too heavily biased towards prosperity, the use of gross national product as its prime measure, profit maximisation in business, and quantification as a gauge of the quality of economic efforts. Economic processes need a global perspective in which multiple values are brought into consideration. Balkenende and Buijs show that many economists and philosophers attempt to broaden horizons by drawing attention to ecological effects, equal opportunities and the economic effects of poverty and exploitation. This leads to a different view of economic development. Central to this view is a concern for well-coordinated collaboration between relevant parties, with an eye to the wellbeing of the planet. The development of our society ties in with possibilities that are dormant in created reality, possibilities that require – and, in fact, will only open up to – an integral perspective. This integral vision is religiously inspired and will be confirmed by the ways in which the economic and social reality is going to prosper.

Such an approach is fundamentally hopeful. It isn't only Christians who see how much is wrong with the current form of capitalism. Developments in society and on a global scale let us see what's wrong. And the tide is turning (somewhat). Many thinkers are proposing alternatives. Here and there, new practices are taking shape. Those other ideas and practices are evoked by norms that are inherent in reality; they 'really' exist. They are not human inventions that we have projected onto reality. They aren't theoretical abstractions. They are principles at work in human economic intercourse and that's where they show us that they can't be ignored with impunity.

BE RADICAL: CHALLENGING FAITH IN PROGRESS

In the work of Bob Goudzwaard (1934-2024) we hear a different, more prophetic tone. Though he first wanted to go into politics, after receiving his doctorate in economics in 1970, he became a Professor of economics at VU University, Amsterdam and later also a lecturer in cultural philosophy there. He served in the Dutch parliament but turned down a major cabinet post because it would have obliged him to support the renewal of nuclear armaments in Europe. He held numerous social positions both nationally and internationally, and was involved in all kinds of activities, especially in the field of development cooperation.

Goudzwaard was driven by a deep concern about our culture: he sees it heading for catastrophe. In his most important book, *Capitalism and Progress* (1976), he writes that the unbridled pursuit of (economic) growth has led to despoliation of the living environment (pollution, reduced biodiversity) and a looming shortage of natural resources (raw materials and energy). Moreover, the capitalist system is vulnerable; inflation and high unemployment (at the time) demonstrate this fact.

Goudzwaard argues that the capitalist market economy has a great impact on the lives, thoughts and self-experience of citizens. This influence isn't limited to the sphere of work and the production of goods. It penetrates all spheres of life: sports, sexuality and the use of time are susceptible. These developments are based on a single dominant cultural motive, namely the belief in progress, and on one essential element in the structure and composition of Western society, namely capitalism. Goudzwaard believes that we can only solve the problems of Western society if we have the courage to puncture the autonomous development of technology and economy. He advocates a balanced development of society that honours the norms for economy, technology, ethics and justice (here again: the simultaneous realisation of norms). Finally, he pleads for a spiritual repentance that takes serious note of what the Bible says about God's intention with creation.

Capitalism and Progress is an important book, widely read outside the circles of academics and policymakers. It awakened Christians and non-Christians alike to the fact that silent conformity to the existing economic order is complicit in the exploitation of non-Western countries, in unjust economic relations, and in the depletion and pollution of the natural environment. He thus became, together with Harry de Lange (Goudzwaard & De Lange, 1995), the founder of the 'economy of enough', an idea that has gained much influence in the churches and in politics, even globally.

DARE TO THINK BIG: ECONOMIC THEORY FROM MEXICO

Yet another wind is blowing in the work of Adolfo García de la Sienra. García de la Sienra is a Mexican economist, logician and philosopher who, after studying and obtaining his doctorate at Stanford, became an enthusiastic advocate of Dooyeweerd's work when he encountered it later in his career. The work of García de la Sienra (1998, 2001) concerns the foundations of economic theory and is quite technical. It leans towards dynamic systems theory and displays a great facility in mathematics and logic. Nevertheless, a discussion of it fits within this framework.

What Balkenende and Buijs do in the field of socio-economic practice, García de la Sienra does in the field of economic theory formation. He follows Goudzwaard's analyses and adds another element to them by moving into the study of finance. He shows how speculation on (among other things) the stock market can lead to enormous and undesirable differences between the real value and the market value of goods.

As with Balkenende and Buijs, García de la Sienra's approach is fundamentally hopeful. There is a lot wrong, but economic theory can be rescued. This can happen when economists get a clear view of what he calls 'normative functions'. Normative functions are human responses to the normative structure of the world. They enable us to make an 'optimum (the best) of social choices'. In other words, normative functions imply a weighting matrix that helps us to assign a relative value to different elements (choices, effects, aspects) of economic processes. We are in need of a broader, more balanced view of the different aspects and their norms. If economists need such a weighting matrix, then it is clear that their science is not purely empirical and neutral. So, based on the idea of normative functions, economists should bite the bullet and develop a set of (normative) ideas about the relative importance of different options and their place in the economic process.

In the prevailing (neo)classical approach, the economy is seen as the sum of individual preferences aimed at achieving a certain level of personal wellbeing. But that is far too narrow a basis, according to García de la Sienra. There are, after all, more things important than just individual wellbeing. What about having choices, living in a free country, mattering to others, and having a political voice? This also holds for the global process of socio-economic development. This process requires a broader perspective in view of the interests of the global population. These interests involve more than just satisfaction of needs (consumption). Consumption requires

production and production processes may have an intrinsic value. It matters how products are created – think of working conditions, child labour and environmental effects. Goods that are produced need to be distributed and this distribution needs rules. Distribution rules are laid down in agreements on prices and the accessibility of markets. These agreements are, therefore, fully normative because they aim at a wise balance between all relevant facets.

García de la Sienra believes that the problems signalled by Goudzwaard, such as poverty, unemployment and environmental pollution, can both be predicted and solved by using the weighting matrix that the various normative functions provide. A biased theory that only assigns value to 'productive' labour leads by definition to social inequality, poverty and the tendency to colonise other countries. He quotes philosopher Georg Friedrich Hegel in this context, who predicted as much (i.e. the colonisation of other countries) in his philosophy of law early in the 19th century. When society begins to relativise the one-sided prestige of 'productive' labour, it will also become more open to the idea of rewarding care for children, the elderly and other needy people, as well as care for the living environment, education and the practice of the arts. With regard to speculation in shares, García de la Sienra proposes that the role of the capital market (the stock exchange) must again be made subordinate to the real economy. Price fluctuations must be dampened by estimates of the real value of products – based on normative functions. Interest rates must not rise above profit percentages. Wages should be proportionate to workers' efforts in the production process.

García de la Sienra is fascinated by what Dooyeweerd says about the direction in which culture is moving. Dooyeweerd speaks of an 'integrative tendency'. This tendency towards integration – which incidentally goes hand in hand with the tendency towards differentiation and specialisation – is compatible with the idea that we are heading towards a world with a single (world) government. García de la Sienra, like Dooyeweerd, does not find this an objectionable idea in itself. Globalisation is world integration. Naturally, there are many threats. Sin and evil have their home in the human heart. Nevertheless, he believes that with a sound theory of normative functions it should be possible to develop a framework for balanced socio-economic development on a global level.

DO WE STILL NEED DOOYEWEERD?

The authors we have brought into consideration all argue for a broad, balanced and norm-responsive view of the economy and economic life. The idea of 'simultaneous norm realisation' expresses this and forms the common thread in their thinking. In retrospect, one might wonder whether we needed Dooyeweerd's philosophy to arrive at the term and the idea behind it. Perhaps not; it's difficult to say. But each and every one of the thinkers discussed is explicit in appreciation for Dooyeweerd, just as they are explicit about their inspiration by biblical principles such as justice, faithfulness, charity and stewardship. Behind this lies the conviction that reality is fundamentally meaningful and that it responds to human interventions.

Dooyeweerd never started philosophising with just a slate of biblical principles. He took a step back, inspected the cultural and intellectual reality of his time, formed an idea of what was going on and connected that idea to his religious insights and intuitions. These insights and intuitions were given a philosophical translation which was then refined and focused by referring back to religious and other sources. We see a similar process in the authors discussed here. Each of them takes a step back to see the bigger picture. Then comes the attempt to interpret economic practice conceptually and philosophically. The interpretation takes place against the background of biblical insights and faith-shaped intuitions.

The term 'simultaneous realisation of norms' is a good example of how this interaction works. On the one hand, it functions as an overarching rule to promote a broad and balanced development of economic life. On the other hand, it gains depth through religious inspiration. There are norms that must be respected and lines that may not be crossed. The balance that is to be struggled for acquires relief by religious awareness. This awareness is expressed in compassion and care for the weak and oppressed, in grief over the damaged and threatened living environment, and in the conviction that creation is not neutral material but requires respect and alignment.

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THE TASK OF THE STATE [...] IS JUSTICE. PUBLIC JUSTICE, BECAUSE IF JUSTICE IS NOT JUSTICE TO *ALL*, IT CANNOT REALLY BE CALLED JUSTICE [...]. PUBLIC JUSTICE FOR A CHRISTIAN SHOULD BE MORE THAN GIVING EACH HIS/HER DUE. ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE, IT MEANS RESTORING THE POWER OF THE WEAK THROUGH THE SACRIFICE OF THE POWERFUL. THE PRIVILEGED HAVE THE OBLIGATION TO EXTEND THEIR PRIVILEGES TO THE HUNGRY, WEAK, POOR, SICK, OPPRESSED AND UNDERPRIVILEGED.

BENNY VAN DER WALT

(2003, p. 319)

15
POLITICS

INTRO

Politics is about fundamental questions. What is the core task of the government? What are the most important principles behind the different ways we look at politics? What virtues does a just political system depend on? What does 'public justice' mean in a multicultural society? How might Christians love their neighbour by engaging in politics? How can religiously-based political views contribute to political debate without feeding polarisation? In this chapter we make the acquaintance of a number of Christian philosophers and theologians who answer such questions in alignment, more or less, with Dooyeweerd.

THE SEARCH FOR JUSTICE

What is the core task of government? In Dooyeweerd's view, the state is qualified as a societal reality by the juridical aspect (Chapter 7). Its core task therefore lies in protecting and promoting public justice. It may – it must – use its power to carry out that core task. Dooyeweerd's view of the government's core task is broadly endorsed by his followers, but there is considerable discussion about its implementation. Jonathan Chaplin discusses Dooyeweerd's view of the state in *Herman Dooyeweerd: Christian Philosopher of State and Civil Society* (2011) and shows where other choices can or should be made.

In his article 'Politics in One World' (2001, see also 1988), James Skillen asks whether Dooyeweerd's vision of government is a universal, normative given for the development of society or whether it is a Western vision that we have inherited from

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the Enlightenment. Skillen believes that we find in it a normative given that applies to all cultures. He shows that the rule of law with its focus on public justice creates the conditions that citizens need if they are to develop their gifts and creative capacities. Citizens and the societal relationships in which they live can only grow and flourish in such soil.

In *Understanding and Rebuilding Africa* (2003), the South African thinker Benny van der Walt signposts a path for his country from 'desperation today' to 'expectation for tomorrow', as the subtitle indicates. He discusses his country's situation in detail while paying attention to traditional religion and various philosophical schools among other things. In his plea for a Christian vision of the state, based on the thinking of Dooyeweerd, he discusses the value of democracy and the qualified powers of the government. He argues that true justice can only be achieved if we are willing to think beyond human rights. He presents in an impressive manner – and in accord with the vision of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission set up following the abolition of *apartheid* – five biblical requirements for true reconciliation and peace in his country: acceptance of responsibility, repentance and conversion, confession of guilt, forgiveness and restitution.

VISIONS AND ILLUSIONS

In his book *Political Visions & Illusions* (2019), David Koyzis discusses the most powerful ideologies of our time, such as liberalism, conservatism, nationalism and socialism. All these ideologies, he argues, have a closed worldview at their foundation. They speak about politics without any reference to the Origin or Creator of reality (Chapter 1). Koyzis concludes that each of them absolutises something of value in the creation, but then elevates it above creation and ultimately adopts it as a religious or worldview axiom. He goes on to show that each of these ideologies has a story of its own to offer about the evil in the world (a fall into sin) and the proposed solution (a salvation).

Two examples may be given: liberal thought takes the autonomy of the individual as non-negotiable. It regards the community as a threat to the sovereign individual – and therefore as the very source of evil. As salvation, it preaches the emancipation of the individual and the state's responsibility to guarantee that individual freedom. The author openly acknowledges the good things that liberalism has also done. He refers to efforts by liberals for human rights and the liberal plea for human freedom.

But liberalism is blind to the diversity of communities within a society and has no substantive vision of the general interest (common good).

Nationalism, another ideology that Koyzis discusses, recognises that people seek their identity in the community and that this community may demand loyalty from its citizens. What exactly the identity is and how far the loyalty should go depend, among other things, on the histories and contexts of nationalist movements. Any development that threatens that identity provides the definition of evil, whether it arises within the nation or without. The rhetoric of redemption is what you hear when a national leader rises up to throw off the yoke of oppression. For nationalism, the state is an instrument for realisation of a country's ambitions and an expression of the will of its people. But nationalism also fails to discern the diverse communities within society and it denies any space to groups that may espouse different political visions.

Koyzis presents a Christian worldview that he summarises with the world's creation, fall and redemption (Chapter 3). That is the perspective from which he characterises the ideological narratives as idolatry: they fail to render what is due to the Creator and Redeemer. He acknowledges that this characterisation may come across as provocative. But he is quite sober about that: every ideology makes an exclusive claim to the truth.

FORMATION OF MORAL CAPITAL

In his book *Moreel kapitaal* [*Moral Capital*] (2009), Roel Kuiper asks what political virtues are needed if society and the rule of law are to flourish. He tells us that an intense debate is going on among politicians, policymakers, journalists and scientists about the condition of society. That debate is pervaded by a feeling that things of great importance to the community and to politics are being lost. Social connections are broken; society is individualised; social trust has evaporated. What's at stake, in other words, is the quality of human relationships. In this context, he speaks of 'moral capital', the ability of individuals and communities to establish moral relationships and to stand up for care in the world. In his view, it is an attitude that expresses core values such as love and trust. Kuiper uses the term 'capital' to emphasise that this ability is a costly commodity.

Kuiper discusses the driving force of modern thinking in detail, following Dooyeweerd's theory of ground motives (Chapter 3). He shows that the combina-

tion of utopian thinking, the promotion of individual autonomy and an idea of social relations as rational relations has led to great tensions in society, loss of values, vulnerable social relations, exclusion and undermining of self-respect. Western society is beholden to contractual thinking: individual self-interest is decisive. Kuiper therefore advocates a re-evaluation of covenantal thinking in which people have (and sense) a shared responsibility for the wellbeing of the communities they are part of. Social structures (Chapter 7) that nurture and spread moral capital are of vital importance here, the family in particular being their smallest and most important exemplar. The moral capital generated in these structures forms the foundation for politics and society.

MULTICULTURAL JUSTICE AND SHARIA

The influx of asylum seekers to Europe is stoking up heated debate in many countries. The questions are: 'How many, and which ones, should be admitted?' and 'How can we cope with a growing tally of ethnic cultures and religious beliefs within the same community?' In 2011, Jonathan Chaplin wrote the essay *Multiculturalism* for a British audience about these questions. It was recently published in Dutch and provided with a new introduction and some responses. In close consultation with the author, it was entitled *Multiculturele gerechtigheid* (*Multicultural Justice*) (2020).

With this essay, Chaplin wants to contribute to a Christian vision of a just multicultural order. But what is 'multiculturalism'? Chaplin notes that the word is used with several meanings. It may simply indicate a factual state of affairs: cultural or religious diversity. The word may also be used to express the belief that all cultures are morally equal. Chaplin, by the way, doesn't share this view, and quotes Charles Taylor (1995) with approval. It's a belief that comes down to saying goodbye to any critical dialogue between cultures. Taylor thinks that there must be room in such dialogue for negative judgements about aspects of different cultures – including our own. Finally, 'multiculturalism' is used for the set of principles that guide government policy.

Chaplin believes that this last meaning is of great importance for politics. Building on Dooyeweerd's vision of justice in the public domain and the state's responsibility for it, he presents his appeal for multicultural justice. Multicultural justice requires a framework for just public relations between citizens and communities that differ ethnically and religiously. It means equal rights, duties, responsibilities,

support and opportunity. Government has the power to promote such a framework and Chaplin shows how the government could construct one.

Another challenging question is whether, and if so, how far, sharia should be recognised and allowed a place in the legislation of democratic societies. James Skillen (2011) discusses this question in his essay '*Shari'a* and Pluralism'. He points out that in the traditional Muslim view, sharia runs through the public domain, the private sphere and the different societal structures to a great depth. Skillen argues that this view is at odds with the legal systems of the West in which (1) there is space in the public domain for different religions and worldviews and (2) social structures can shape themselves in relative independence from government (Chapter 7). On the other hand, when elements of sharia that relate to worship, family life and education are detached from its all-pervading tradition, he sees (limited) possibilities for their accommodation within the differentiated system of public governance and social freedoms that is cherished in the West.

FAITH, LOVE OF NEIGHBOUR AND POLITICS

How do faith and politics relate to each other? Should Christians spend their energy on strengthening democracy? In his book *Christ and the Common Life: Political Theology and the Case for Democracy* (2019), Luke Bretherton provides a theological reflection on politics and democracy. He believes that Christians should commit themselves to democracy because it is the best system of law to advance the flourishing of society. In the introduction to his book, he explains that politically involved Christians in Europe and North America often ask him the same question: how can Christ's command to love your neighbour be given concrete shape in politics? Bretherton argues that this question has three elements: (1) What is the right response to the poverty, suffering and injustice I meet when I try to love my neighbour? (2) How can I, in loving my neighbour, remain true to my own roots, identity and beliefs while sharing a common life with neighbours whose view of life differs from mine? And (3), what sort of power determines the relationship between me and another and how is this power distributed? This last question is fundamental when we think about the flourishing of people.

Bretherton draws on a large number of (Christian) sources to discuss those questions. Among other things, he investigates the thinking of humanitarianism and of Black Power on suffering, injustice and the common good. Humanitarianism is a

collective term for a broad spectrum of idealistic movements, all of which strive for a just society and care for all living beings. Black Power is a political movement that denounces white supremacy in politics, society and religion. Bretherton shows that these approaches have different starting points. Humanitarianism lays emphasis on the equality of people and struggles with the unequal distribution of privileges. Black Power arose from the devastating consequences of oppression, systematic exclusion and an unjust distribution of power and emphasises the factual inequality of people. In a chapter on sovereignty, Bretherton (2019, pp. 359-399) discusses in detail the thinking of Althusius, Maritain and Dooyeweerd about the relationships of the individual, societal structures and sovereignty. They are thinkers who offer rich insights that run counter to political and economic absolutism and tyranny.

In his book *Faith in Democracy: Framing a Politics of Deep Diversity* (2021), Jonathan Chaplin addresses the increasing polarisation between Christian and secular politicians. On the one hand, some Christians in the debate call out the dangerous arrogance behind the insistence that democratic principles must always prevail over religious convictions. On the other hand, secularists believe that we must not retreat to a past in which religious thinking dominated society. Chaplin asks how the relationship between religion and politics can be addressed in a fruitful way without falling into a barren and deep polarisation. He believes that politics is about the common good and public justice as these are contained in the most important constitutional principles of the Western liberal democracies. On this basis, he defends the maximum space for the contribution of religiously based political visions. On the one hand, those perspectives do not have any privileged position in the political landscape but, on the other hand, they are not obliged to adapt their vision to that political landscape. In concrete terms, this means space for political reasoning based on religious convictions, space for faith-based societal structures, and space for faith-based power in society.

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OUR AIM IS TO ARGUE
THAT MORAL REFLECTION ON
MEDICAL DEVELOPMENTS OF ALL
KINDS SHOULD TAKE SHAPE, NOT ON
THE MARGINS BUT AT THE CENTRE
OF MEDICAL PRACTICE.

HENK JOCHEMSEN
AND GERRIT GLAS
(1997, p. 16)

16
HEALTHCARE

INTRO

In Chapter 12 the normative approach to practice was shown to have emerged from the need for a Christian-inspired vision of healthcare and we described the background to this approach. In the intervening chapters, the basic ideas behind the approach have been applied to a number of practices. Now we return to healthcare.

How can we decide what is 'good' in the practice of healthcare? How can I take responsibility, as a doctor or nurse, when the work itself is becoming increasingly complex and I have to justify myself in more and more ways? How do I hold my own in the hustle and bustle of modern healthcare? What am I doing it for, if the profession demands so much of me? The normative approach to medical practice aims to provide answers to questions of this sort.

NORMATIVE PRACTICES: AN INTEGRAL APPROACH

We will first summarise the core of the normative practice approach. This approach integrates in its perspective an analysis of the standards, duties and responsibilities of the people who work together. Their interactions as practitioners have their 'own nature', their own purpose and their own intrinsic value; not imposed from without, but from within. Think of the nurse who sees a patient's needs at a glance and gives concrete shape to her or his responsibility in an appropriate way. The responsibility exists, even if you are not aware of it. It is ingrained in the relationship with 'the other'. That idea stems from Dooyeweerd's view of reality as meaning (Chapter 1).

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An integral approach like this is necessary to protect ethics and worldview from reduction to a point of view or to just being a source of inspiration. When that's what they become, they exert their influence from the sidelines and don't really have an impact on the entire practice. The normative approach to medical practice focuses on the practice itself. What it offers is not a set of detailed ethical rules for the doctor or nurse, but a vision of the nature and coherence of the interactions on which medical practice is based. This offer, of course, is made in all modesty. A normative practice approach is not a blueprint; it offers professionals a (heuristic) framework, a map to keep them on the right track among the various responsibilities of the participating professionals or parties.

A BLUEPRINT THAT IS NOT A BLUEPRINT

Here (Figure 16.1) we see a schematic representation of medicine approached as a norm-responsive practice (Hoogland, 1995; Jochemsen & Glas, 1997). The entire tangle of interactions in healthcare is summarised for simplicity's sake in the one word 'practice'. It's a tangle we'll need to unravel later. The structure of medical practice is represented as a layered cylinder; the arrow represents the aim of the practice; the shell around the cylinder represents the context (Chapter 12).

In the *structure* of healthcare we distinguish three kinds of principles that shape it: qualifying, conditioning and foundational principles. The qualifying principles express what the practice exists for: its ultimate goal or destination. 'Beneficence' (doing good for the patient) is one of the most important norms for medical practice. This norm lays down that medicine's primary focus is the wellbeing of the patient. This applies not only to doctors and nurses, but along the line also to support services and boards of directors. They act in the service of the patient.

The conditioning principles include all the norms that make healthcare practice possible. Those are the conditions that the medical practice must meet in order to function as a practice. We are thinking of administrative, social, economic and legal conditions (rules, principles) for professional practice.

Foundational norms govern the basis of medical practice. Without them, no healthcare practice can exist. Scientific and technological standards belong to this foundational dimension of medical practice, together with all kinds of skills and technical know-how.

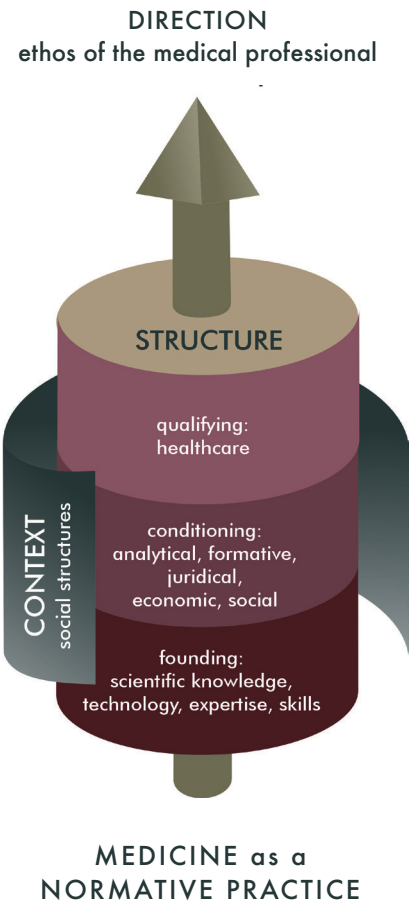

Figure 16.1 The normative practice approach distinguishes three elements: structure, context and direction. Here, these elements are specified for medical practice. ⏎

The analysis of healthcare practice is therefore about identifying relevant principles. The normative approach organises these different principles in line with Dooyeweerd's theories of modal aspects (Chapter 4) and social relationships (Chapter 7). Healthcare practice is qualified by the moral aspect: it is about caring for others. The practice is supported by and founded in accumulated knowledge and expertise: the formative aspect. The doctor's and nurse's actions are also made possible by all kinds of boundary conditions that must satisfy logical, formative, social, economic and juridical norms. In order to support responsible medical activity, for example, a sound administrative structure must be in place: a reliable system for patient registration, well-tuned ICT, comprehensive medical records accessible to authorised practitioners but kept in strict confidence.

The qualifying, conditioning and foundational principles are also collectively called 'constitutive norms'. They constitute (establish) the medical practice. In fact, they make that practice possible.

Running right through the structural or constitutive side of the practice of medicine, we see the *direction* arrow, representing regulatory norms. Nurses or doctors bring with them their own deepest convictions, ideals and worldviews, and are guided by them in 'directing' their practice towards a specific goal.

However, medical practice does not operate in isolation; it is always connected to other institutions and associations, which together form the *context* (the scroll around the cylinder). Medical practice is embedded in a nexus of social bodies comprising hospitals, local health boards, police, municipalities, national government, and so on. The doctor therefore cannot work alone, but constantly interacts with others: nurses, psychologists, colleagues, insurers, management, boards of directors, public administration, inspectors, the police, the judiciary or the legal profession. All those relationships have their own normative structure and can be further analysed on the basis of the three types of norms.

THREE EXAMPLES

With the following examples we show how the normative approach to practice can help create clarity about certain interactions.

TECHNICISM

It's a well-known complaint of patients that doctors see their role too much as *technical* or instrumental and pay too little attention to the trust relationship with the patients themselves. The criticism is deserved. The normative approach identifies this fault as a role reversal of principles: foundational principles have usurped the place of qualifying principles. The doctor is acting as a technician, an engineer, not as someone you'd want to entrust your physical or mental healthcare to.

DOMINANCE OF THE EFFICIENCY NORM

In times of financial stringency and limited resources, managers and executives tend to overemphasise efficiency. Efficiency is an economic norm that can very eas-

ily supersede the norm of beneficence (the true qualifying function of healthcare). The good doctor or nurse is then no longer a professional who gives care, but the one who 'achieves his or her quota'. In this context, the healthcare product has become the amount of medical activity that will attract fees in the private sector or attract the attention of fund allocators in the public. Here, too, there is a reversal of values.

JURIDICAL CONSTRAINT

A final example concerns the juridical constraint of healthcare relationships. Every medical or nursing action has a legal aspect. However, this legal aspect can weigh unjustifiably on decision-making. What results is that the doctor looks for the 'safe' course and pursues a defensive type of practice. For fear that a complaint might reach a disciplinary board, or even the General Medical Council (in the United Kingdom), the doctor assumes a formal and risk-averse attitude. That expresses itself, for example, in the proliferation of unnecessary investigations. The juridical (conditioning norm) has overtaken the beneficence (qualifying norm) in importance and, in fact, adopted the role of qualifying principle. The consequence of this role reversal is, ultimately, a poorer doctor–patient relationship and an ineffective and expensive healthcare system.

THE CONSTITUTIVE AND REGULATORY SIDES PRESUPPOSE EACH OTHER

The constitutive and regulatory sides of healthcare, its structure and direction (the cylinder and the arrow) are intimately intertwined. After all, the constitutive side of a care practice is shaped by professionals with certain attitudes, motives and ideals (an ethos). The regulatory side of a care practice is therefore reflected in the way in which the practice is concretely shaped.

Practices evolve over time and the direction in which they develop can correspond to or deviate from their destination (caring for others, doing them good). In other words, practices can flourish or decline. In the historical development of healthcare, the dynamics of both the constitutive and the regulatory sides are visible. The dynamic of the constitutive side is reflected in the development of knowledge and technology and in the increasingly complex interactions entailed in working in a

modern organisation. The dynamic of the regulatory side is mainly seen in changing perceptions of care and life and death. This last dynamic is fundamental because it gives perspective, meaning and purpose to the practice of medicine. This does not happen because 'separate' individuals shape a practice to their liking, but principally because people together make the healthcare practice correspond to what they see as its goal or destination.

Medical education plays an important role in this integration of the structural and directional dimensions of medical practice. Healthcare professionals need both to have clarity about the different kinds of normativity and to integrate them in an attitude that is guided by accountability, wisdom and unselfish dedication. That is why 'clinical apprenticeship' is so important, i.e. the prolonged and close association of teacher and pupil in the assessment and treatment of patients. In the normative practice approach, there is no need to separate the science from the art of medicine: the science is integrated in the art, understood as the skilful, conscientious and creative interaction with the patient. This interaction is based on expert knowledge and attunes to the complex meshwork of interactions in the current healthcare system.

THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

Up to this point, we have spoken about healthcare practice as if it were a single practice that focuses on the doctor–patient or nurse–patient relationship. But that is a simplification of course. In reality, other interactions and relationships play an important role: with professionals from other healthcare callings (psychologists and physiotherapists for example), public health services, professional organisations, supervisory bodies, management, insurers, representatives of local and national government, and politics. This entire web of interactions answers to the 'rules of the game' in the social contract (A Level Deeper 16.1). The social contract describes the agreements, rights and obligations of participating parties.

We can clarify the various relationships between all these parties using the normative practice approach. The relationship between managers of healthcare institutions and insurers is primarily an economic one. Managers have the task of thinking through this economic relationship and ensuring that it is disclosed by the beneficence which the moral aspect qualifies. On the other hand, care professionals can't escape their responsibility for the economic and administrative aspects of their practice. After all, without healthy business management, there is no practice at all. Doctors cannot legitimise themselves solely on the basis of either their expert

role or their moral commitment. In accordance with the social contract, they must also show themselves responsive to their economic, legal and administrative obligations. The parties must strike the balance in this collectively, the normative practice approach being used as a framework for its negotiation.

A LEVEL DEEPER

16.1 HEALTHCARE PRACTICE SPRINGS FROM A SOCIAL CONTRACT

The concept of social contract builds on social contract theories that we encounter in philosophy as early as the 17th century with Thomas Hobbes, but later also with John Locke (17th century), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (18th century) and John Rawls (20th century). In the 20th century, the concept of 'social contract' expanded to accommodate all kinds of cooperation between citizens. It is still about rights and obligations with regard to some particular matter, a social good, and usually one that individual citizens cannot provide and for which they need the help of others.

Professions, as such, crystallise the social contract with regard to particular needs; in the case of medicine it is the need for healthcare of a certain quality. Agreements are negotiated with insurers or governments about the provision of this care and the rights and obligations of those involved are laid down in them. The contract is therefore based on an 'exchange' of values. Citizens ask for good care and pay insurance premiums and taxes for it. Doctors provide ethical, high-quality care, based on the best possible knowledge and expertise. They are focused on the other and not on self-interest. In exchange for this (the moral commitment), doctors are given the right to develop their own quality standards and to decide who may join the professional group. Whether the contract is viable depends on whether the various values (or standards) have been instantiated in a balanced way. Here we again see the usefulness of the concept of 'simultaneous realisation of norms' (Chapter 14).

FURTHER APPLICATIONS OF THE NORMATIVE PRACTICE APPROACH

The normative practice approach was mainly applied at first to the relationship between individual healthcare professionals and care recipients. Attempts have since been made to apply this approach at meso and macro levels (Glas, 2019a, 2019b). That is where, not unexpectedly, one comes up against the multitude and complexity of interactions in healthcare. Glas and Verkerk have, each in their own context, made attempts to show that complexity as manageable.

Glas developed the PPC model (person – professional role – context). It distinguishes the person, in the context of a specific practice (Glas, 2019c), from the professional role he or she plays. Practitioners do not coincide with their role. Beyond it, they also draw on their personal inspiration and vision. Reflection on one's role is ingrained in being a professional. We note, incidentally, that neither do patients coincide with their own illnesses. Glas (2019c) also shows that the normative practice model can help to clarify for doctors how their practice is embedded in society (social contract). It helps them see how other parties view them and what types of norms play a role in this. For example, it is important that doctors understand something of the economic reality in which they work. That will help them adjust, for example, to the legitimate expectations of the healthcare insurer, be that a commercial organisation or the state.

Verkerk has simplified the complexity of the various relationships and made it more manageable in two ways. Firstly, by translating the normative practice approach into the so-called 'Triple 'I' Model', which represents a practice's *Identity* and intrinsic values, the legitimate *Interests* of stakeholders, and the *Ideals* and basic beliefs in society (Chapter 12; Verkerk, 2014). Then, he sets alongside that the distinction between professional practices and users' practices (Verkerk et al., 2017). The concept of 'users' practices' was originally developed for the different zones of a patient's life in which an orthopaedic device is used; those territories are after all also decisive for the specification of the aid. It's a concept that can embrace all kinds of medical intervention – such as taking medication, using aids, doing exercises and performing medical procedures, either by the patient or by the informal caregiver in his or her own living environment.

NO 'THREE THICK VOLUMES'

We end with a more personal confession. When Gerrit Glas attended his first international conference on Christian philosophy, an older professor from the United States asked him if he might perhaps be the one to write the much-desired 'three thick volumes' on philosophical anthropology. That was in the mid-1980s. The question was meant jokingly, but it illustrates how people were thinking at the time. Dooyeweerd had designed the framework; it only needed to be further worked out, for all branches of philosophy and for all academic disciplines.

History reveals that things have transpired quite differently – and also that it doesn't work like that. The relationship between philosophy and practice is much more complicated. You can't reform practice from above, by theory alone. Familiarity with practice is necessary to bring about change. Philosophical insight acquires authority from that familiarity. So, it is not in the least strange that this philosophical insight takes on different forms in practice. If the chapters in this second part have shown anything, it is that Dooyeweerd's philosophy inspires professionals to rethink and renew their own practice.

"

ORIGINALLY I WAS STRONGLY UNDER THE INFLUENCE FIRST OF THE NEO-KANTIAN PHILOSOPHY, LATER ON OF HUSSERL'S PHENOMENOLOGY. THE GREAT TURNING POINT IN MY THOUGHT WAS MARKED BY THE DISCOVERY OF THE RELIGIOUS ROOT OF THOUGHT ITSELF [...].

HERMAN DOOYEWEERD

(*NC*, I, p. v)

17
A RADICAL YET GENEROUS PHILOSOPHY

INTRO

In the preface we announced the four questions that thread their way through this book:

1 Why is Dooyeweerd's philosophy so radical?
2 What critical questions does he pose to modern Western philosophy?
3 What contemporary problems might this philosophy solve?
4 How could philosophers and others who are just interested in philosophy benefit from this philosophy – regardless of their religion, worldview or philosophy of life?

In this final chapter we want to return to these questions and discuss them.

WHY IS DOOYEWEERD'S PHILOSOPHY SO RADICAL?

To read through Dooyeweerd's own texts is without a doubt a *tour de force*. It's a serious challenge to understand this philosopher. Profound reflections, erudition and the unusual vocabulary he evolved – they all demand hard work. But his words open windows on a real thinker, a 'public intellectual', who weighed and considered every one of them as he wrote – and always with a fountain pen on lined notepad paper. Marcel Verburg shows in his biography, *Herman Dooyeweerd: The Life and Work of a Christian Philosopher* (2015), that behind the thinker there's a warm, even a romantic, personality, an authentic spirit that lets his heart speak.

This description brings into the open why Dooyeweerd's philosophy is so radical. There is only one possible answer: he lets his heart speak. We saw that already in the

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twenty-year-old student, in what he wrote for other Christian students. Everything depends on your deepest convictions. 'For everything is illuminated from within, the entire world by the fire that burns within us' (Verburg, 2015, pp. 13-14). This is the core of his life's work: philosophy is illuminated by faith in God. This creed is an echo of Abraham Kuyper's speech at the opening of VU University in Amsterdam in 1880. In it, Kuyper (1998, p. 489) emphasises that he and his cofounders feel called and propelled forwards by the voice of Christ: 'the fire still kept burning in our bones. There was One mightier than we who urged us and spurred us onward. We could not rest. In spite of ourselves we *had* to go forward.'

In Calvin's footsteps, Dooyeweerd chooses to place the sovereignty of God at the centre of reality, his work as Creator and Lord of the world. And he wants that sovereignty to be what 'illuminates everything from within'. We saw how this starting point is decisive for his view of meaning and being (Chapter 1); and from there onwards, for his vision of the multifaceted nature of reality (Chapter 4) and the specific natures of different social spheres (Chapter 7).

This emphasis on God's sovereignty is perhaps too one-sided, as we suggested in Chapter 11. There are also other accents to be found in the Bible, on divine jealousy and hurt, for example, on God as a companion in suffering, on the triumph over evil through death and weakness. As a 21st-century reader, one can sometimes look at the self-evident certainty of Dooyeweerd's faith with amazement (or nostalgia). Haven't we learned much more about the origins of the Bible and the cosmos over recent years? Hasn't Christianity lost its naivety through developments in culture (postmodernism), theology (historical-critical method, hermeneutics), and the natural sciences (biology, cosmology)? We could say much more about these questions, but we simply place Dooyeweerd's carefree experience of faith next to them. More fundamental than any possible doubt is the 'fire' that was just mentioned, his being touched in the soul, his assent to the call to serve the Creator.

Dooyeweerd grew up in a reformed environment that was marked by the thinking of Calvin and Kuyper. He was also in conversation with neo-Kantians who were theorising about the fundamental conditions for theoretical thinking itself. This context clarifies for us why he makes certain choices. His choices could have been different. He could have thought along with Pascal about being touched by the divine fire. In company with the Danish thinker Kierkegaard, he could have turned against the cultivation of abstract visions to focus on the existential choices people must make. With the Jewish philosopher Buber, he could have focused on the relationship between God and man and between man and fellow man. He could have...

All true, but... it would have made no difference to the most fundamental thing: the fire, being touched, being driven from the heart. That is what connects Dooyeweerd with Pascal, Kierkegaard and Buber. All four acknowledge the fire, the divine touch. It's the reality of this touch that drives their radicality. The thinking of all four is challenging because of the 'powerlessness to do otherwise'. This doesn't, on its own, solve the relativity of postmodernism. But there are different experiences that should be set alongside it.

WHAT CRITICAL QUESTIONS DOES DOOYEWEERD ADDRESS TO MODERN WESTERN PHILOSOPHY?

We have described Dooyeweerd as critic-in-chief of the adulation of theoretical thought. In today's terms we speak of scientism, the view that only science can determine what is true and what is real. Dooyeweerd was one of the first and most fundamental critics of this view. Others since Dooyeweerd have also criticised scientism, but, despite this critique and despite postmodern relativism, scientism is very much alive and well in certain sectors of science, philosophy, society and politics. Empiricism and positivism dictate the terms in these sectors. They affirm the idea that science can arrive at true and reliable knowledge about reality on the basis of 'facts' and logical reasoning alone. Dooyeweerd's critical questions about scientism are therefore still relevant today.

His critical questions also impinge on quite different views in philosophy: phenomenology, philosophical hermeneutics, deconstructivism and other postmodern kinds of thinking. We cannot investigate all those movements here. It's enough to say that they all revolve around the subject, the person who experiences, searches, interprets, doubts and is conflicted. Dooyeweerd would agree with much of what such philosophers say about the human exploration of the self and its destiny. Humans can no more find *terra firma* in the self than theoretical thinking can find any there. All human thought and action is embodied; so, whether implicitly or explicitly it reveals the person who is doing the thinking and acting. But a human also sustains a relationship with him- or herself and, in that acquaintance (whether it's reflective or implicit), can plumb the depths of human existence.

Dooyeweerd, however, would also criticise the self-absorption of these movements. It's always about the subject, man and his freedom. He would point to the threadbare view of reality among the followers of such movements. In their circles,

reality is a fortuitous and meaningless given. As human beings, we are 'thrown' into the world (Heidegger). The world is opaque, it stands in the way of our freedom (Sartre). Some look upon the world as raw material for individual self-realisation (humanism). Some see it as an empty shell, a deceptive facade, a rigged game of cards. What it conceals is a gaping void (postmodernism). Dooyeweerd has a totally different and much richer vision of reality, as we have seen. All that exists is created. Creation is not self-supporting; it binds us to the Creator. It possesses endless variety, but order and unity nevertheless. It is not strange and arbitrary. Humankind isn't a speck of dust in an empty and meaningless universe. Humanity belongs in this world. The world advertises the fact that it is meant for us and can be a home. Reality 'responds' to what we do; it cooperates when we explore possibilities that do justice to the order and destiny of things; it fights back when we ignore that order and destiny.

Dooyeweerd's philosophy would also raise critical questions about a third, more recent tendency which consists of spiritualising reality or parts of it. You meet it in anthroposophy, Eastern religions or meditative practices, but also in contemporary strands of natural philosophy and cosmology that attribute creative, or even divine, properties to the stardust (for example) that gave birth to everything in the universe. Others go further; they make consciousness the foundation of everything, including the material world; they festoon consciousness with all kinds of creative and divine properties. Dooyeweerd won't be joining their ranks. He sees too clearly that such movements erase the boundary between God and created reality. They tend, as a result, to absolutise some phenomenon or aspect of reality. Vollenhoven would speak in this context of 'partial theism'. You see it, for example, when some bit of cosmic reality is spiritualised as the core, the active creative principle, or source of everything (thus: the 'Origin'). Dooyeweerd calls that the absolutising of an aspect of reality: a move that leads ultimately to a distortion of reality and to some form of dualism.

The questions he posed to modern philosophy are very timely. And when it comes to science, Dooyeweerd's position is also relevant today. On the one hand, science is still presented as the instrument *par excellence* for the development of culture and society. And on the other hand, we also see it currently dismissed as 'just opinion'. One claims that scientific knowledge is autonomous and neutral and the other sets no value on the nature and contribution of science as they appear in the processes of objectification, abstraction and analysis. Dooyeweerd's approach is so much more balanced. He acknowledges the importance of science for disclosing what lies hidden in reality but warns at the same time against the temptation to worship it: scientism.

WHAT CONTEMPORARY PROBLEMS COULD DOOYEWEERD'S PHILOSOPHY SOLVE?

We ought to admit it: philosophers are generally not seen as the kind of people who have much to offer for the solution of major social problems. It's said that one may ask a philosopher one question but go home eventually with ten new ones. At the end of the day, in terms of practical usefulness, philosophy's score comes close to zero.

But a counterclaim is necessary here. Philosophers focus on fundamental questions about humanity, society and reality. Sometimes their questions are scientifically important: questions, for example, about the nature of scientific knowledge. Sometimes they are existential: what's the meaning of life? And sometimes they are questions that everyone encounters, such as the relationship between citizens and government. At first glance, many of these discussions seem far removed from daily life and of limited practical value. But in this case, the appearance is deceptive.

In part I of this book, we closed each chapter with a 'Today' section, giving a practical application of Dooyeweerd's philosophy. We considered the question of the meaning of life; we discussed the driving forces of contemporary populism; we thought about food and how to deal with pandemics. We questioned whether you could reduce people to atoms and molecules and wondered how to take others seriously in (scientific) debate. In part II, we discussed present-day practical applications of Dooyeweerd's philosophy. We saw that the normative approach to practices provides a practical tool for thinking about values in different practices. We focused on scientists, engineers, economists and professionals who apply Dooyeweerd's philosophy to their own fields of interest. We discussed four fields: natural science and technology, economics, politics and healthcare. In each of them, it became clear that elements of Dooyeweerd's philosophy can be used to clarify practical problems, unravel their complexity and suggest directions for solutions.

If there is one thing that this book makes clear, it is that philosophers can contribute constructively to solving social problems. At the same time, it makes clear that making such contributions doesn't just happen automatically. It takes specialist knowledge of social problems, knowledge of Dooyeweerd's various theories, much thought and creativity, and the fundamental willingness to listen to and learn from each other.

HOW COULD PHILOSOPHERS AND OTHERS, WHO ARE JUST INTERESTED IN PHILOSOPHY, BENEFIT FROM DOOYEWEERD'S PHILOSOPHY – REGARDLESS OF THEIR RELIGION, WORLDVIEW OR PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE?

In the first part we recognised that Dooyeweerd's legacy is lavish, fundamental and monumental. But his radical starting point – the sovereignty of God – may give the impression that, whether you're a philosopher or just interested in philosophy, you have to adopt his standpoint to get anything out of his legacy. You may also get the impression that his thinking is so tightly woven that you would be unable to take hold of part of it and leave the rest of his work as it is. But later chapters have shown that it is quite possible to work with parts of Dooyeweerd's thinking and to develop fruitful insights with them. An example is the use of the term 'simultaneous realisation of norms' (Chapter 14).

We have also explained that even if you cannot share Dooyeweerd's religious starting point, you can still benefit much from his philosophy. We will summarise the arguments for this position again. There are four of them.

First, there is the practical relevance of his thought 'out in the field'. The 'Today' sections in part I and all the chapters of part II show that there are scientists and professionals who, sometimes without much philosophical baggage, have been able to apply viewpoints they distilled from Dooyeweerd's work in their field. Unique solutions also regularly emerge that have not yet been put forward in professional practices or in the public debate.

Another practical argument: Dooyeweerd repeatedly appeals to experience that is accessible to everyone, regardless of religious belief. We see this in his proposition that naïve experience precedes theoretical knowledge. We see it again when Dooyeweerd appears to be sympathetic to the adjustment of his theories on empirical grounds. This emerged, for example, as we looked at the theories of modal aspects, things and societal structures. Philosophy requires not just arguments, but also empirical substantiation. That makes philosophical thinking valuable and fruitful.

We also have two philosophical arguments. The first is this: Dooyeweerd shows that the religious viewpoint offers mental space. Religion is often associated with oppression and the narrowing of horizons. But that is far from the truth. Total neutrality does not exist, and complete objectivity is a fiction. Religion, say what you will, has never gone away. Those who deny the religious disposition of humankind

arethe ones who ultimately come to grief. The religious impulse will inevitably fix on certain features of reality itself, which, as a result, will be absolutised. This absolutisation of immanent features of the world leads to a skewed picture of reality and, ultimately, to inner contradiction and a narrowing of one's mental space. One aspect of reality is deemed more important at the expense of others. This threatens and usurps one's sensitivity to the rich diversity of the world we inhabit. Dooyeweerd himself had to struggle with the relationship of faith and philosophy in an existential way. For him it was a matter of the heart, a matter of authentic self-examination. By so doing, he creates inner space, in line with his basic conviction. Moreover, he invites others to conduct a similar self-examination. This generous 'offer of space' is important for everyone with a philosophical interest, professionally or not, and regardless of your worldview or the philosophical tradition in which you grew up.

The second philosophical argument also concerns the relationship between faith and philosophy. In Chapter 9 we have summarised his vision and suggested that Dooyeweerd's approach deviates from well-established paths towards the reconciliation of faith with science and philosophy. Dooyeweerd opts for a route of 'translation' in which religiously inspired key concepts are transformed into philosophical insights that can stand on their own feet in philosophical debate – even without explicit reference to or any foundation in religion or worldview. The question for a philosopher or a person interested in philosophy, therefore, is not whether he or she can recognise him- or herself in Dooyeweerd's religious starting point, but whether one finds the philosophical insights themselves relevant and sufficiently substantiated.

We conclude. Dooyeweerd was an existential and warm thinker; a very different figure than the dry theoretician that is sometimes made of him. His analyses are sharp, radical and always worth our consideration. But these philosophical analyses were not his ultimate goal. Ultimately, Dooyeweerd focused on establishing a generous connection with others, and in doing so, he sought to honour his Creator.

RECOMMENDED READING

Much has been written by and about Herman Dooyeweerd. Out of that large resource, we are making only a small selection of titles here. We realise that this does poor justice to the efforts and merits of the many who also built on Dooyeweerd's ideas. Recommended materials that are only available in Dutch are consolidated here in separate sections. Other texts that are only available in Dutch but may have been referenced in this book can be found in the Literature list at the end of the book.

BY DOOYEWEERD

Dooyeweerd's magnum opus, the three-volume *De wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee* (1935), was translated, revised, expanded and published in 1953-1958 as *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought* with an index as the fourth volume. These are not easily digestible works for either Dutch- or English-speaking readers. Time and perseverance are required but, if invested, the effort will be amply rewarded.

During the Second World War, Dooyeweerd immersed himself in Greek and patristic philosophy to substantiate his thoughts on the effect of ground motives. Of the intended three-part *Reformation and Scholasticism in Philosophy* (RS), only the first volume was published in book form during his lifetime. The whole trilogy is now seeing the light of day after clever editorial work at Paideia Press (Dooyeweerd 1984-2023). These texts are somewhat easier to read than the *New Critique*.

An introduction to his thinking, first given by Dooyeweerd as lectures in the USA, was published in 1960 as *In the Twilight of Western Thought*. An abbreviated English version of *Vernieuwing en bezinning* (1963) under the title *Roots of Western Culture* contains texts written in the aftermath of World War II about the need for repair of faith,

culture and society. Dooyeweerd wrote a great deal in his own field of jurisprudence. Much of this work has also been translated and republished by Paideia Press (currently a publishing imprint under the Cántaro Institute, Jordan Station, CA). Many writings and a complete bibliography can be found on the website of the Neo-Calvinism Research Institute at the Theological University of Utrecht (https://sources.neocalvinism.org/dooyeweerd/). We remind readers also to consult 'All of life redeemed' and the 'Dooyeweerd Pages' websites at https://allofliferedeemed.co.uk/ and https://dooy.info/ respectively.

In *Essays* (2013b), Dooyeweerd discusses various aspects of his legal-philosophical and sociological thinking.

ABOUT DOOYEWEERD

An older, popular English introduction to Dooyeweerd is *Contours of a Christian Philosophy* by Kalsbeek (1975). Strauss published a scholarly introduction, *The Philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd: Expanded Edition* (2024) and edited (with Ouweneel) *Discovering Dooyeweerd* (2023), which brings together contributions from many different fields of study by scholars who recognise Dooyeweerd's originality and importance. Verburg wrote an informative and fascinating biography: *Herman Dooyeweerd: The Life and Work of a Christian Philosopher* (English translation: 2015). Chaplin treats Dooyeweerd's political philosophy at length in *Herman Dooyeweerd: Christian Philosopher of State and Civil Society* (2011).

In Dutch, there are Van Eikema Hommes' (1982) and Van Woudenberg's (1992) introductions to his philosophy; Van Woudenberg et al. discuss in *Kennis en werkelijkheid* (1996) its significance for epistemology, anthropology and the philosophy of the various disciplines. Geertsema et al. (1994) offer a good overview of his work in *Herman Dooyeweerd 1894-1977. Breedte en actualiteit van zijn filosofie*. Bas Hengstmengel (2015) sets Dooyeweerd in the line of Augustine and Calvin. Stellingwerff (2006) gives an informative, fairly detailed sketch of the history of reformed philosophy. Tol and Bril (1992) have worked to make Vollenhoven's legacy accessible to a wider audience.

CHAPTERS 1-3

Kuyper's *Calvinism*, the six Lawrence Stone lectures that Kuyper delivered at Princeton in 1898, is a readily available classic on the neo-Calvinist worldview (Kuyper, 1931). To find your bearings in this worldview, Wolters' *Creation Regained* (1984) is a must-read. More recently, Goheen & Bartholomew (2008) gave us the more eclectic *Living at the Crossroads*. Those who also want a broader theological orientation can turn to the recently written introduction by Brock and Sutanto (2022) and to the handbook by the same authors (Sutanto & Brock, 2024).

Several Dooyeweerd scholars have elaborated on the core idea of reality as meaning; see for example: Geertsema, Buijs et al. in *Homo Respondens: Essays in Christian Philosophy* (2021). 'Creation order' is discussed extensively in both volumes of *The Future of Creation Order* (eds. Glas & De Ridder, 2018; Buijs & Mosher, 2019). Walsh et al. (1995) edited *An Ethos of Compassion and the Integrity of Creation*, a volume which reveals differences of opinion on the theme of creation and creation order.

Dooyeweerd's own views on human knowledge are found in the second part of NC II (p. 429 et seq.). Stafleu provides an in-depth analysis that makes clear how theory is characterised by 'disclosure' (1981, 1982, cf. also Stafleu, 1987). Strauss (2009, Chapter 2) investigates what distinguishes scientific knowledge from other forms of knowing and places this question in a broad philosophical context. Geertsema (2021) includes four chapters on major themes in the philosophy of science.

Dooyeweerd discusses his theory of ground motives extensively in *Roots of Western Culture* and the humanistic ground motive specifically in NC (part I). Verburg (1986) includes a Dooyeweerd text from *Philosophia Reformata* (1941) on the theory of ground motives. Dooyeweerd discusses it in *Verkenningen* (1967; first chapter translated in 2013a). In the first chapters of *Het calvinisme en de reformatie van de wijsbegeerte*, Vollenhoven (1933) provides a clear and radical summary of the neo-Calvinist worldview. *Verantwoording*, a large series of popular scientific books published in Dutch since the 1980s by Buijten & Schipperheijn in collaboration with the *Stichting voor Christelijke Filosofie*, elaborates Dooyeweerd's basic ideas and the neo-Calvinist worldview. The magazine *Sοφie* (originally *Beweging*) contains many neo-Calvinist worldview articles.

CHAPTERS 4–7

The theory of modal aspects is discussed extensively in *NC* (part II). Clouser (2005) emphasises the anti-reductionist thrust of the theories of modal aspects and of social structures in *The Myth of Religious Neutrality*. Strauss (2009) discusses the theories of modal aspects, things and social structures extensively in *Philosophy: Discipline of the Disciplines*. Henderson's (1994) dissertation, *Illuminating Law: The Construction of Herman Dooyeweerd's Philosophy 1918-1928* examines the origin and growth of Dooyeweerd's most important ideas. Van der Walt (2010) works out Dooyeweerd's most important theories in relation to the needs of South African society.

Dengerink (1986) handles the theories of modal aspects and things thoroughly in *De zin van de werkelijkheid*. Woldring and Kuiper's *Reformatorische maatschappijkritiek* (1980) discusses developments in social philosophy and sociology in Dutch Protestant circles. Griffioen and Van Woudenberg (Van Woudenberg et al., 1996) devote extensive consideration to the theory of social communities. In her dissertation *Marktwerking en publieke belangen*, Oosterhuis-Blok (2020) provides an analysis of the principles of subsidiarity and sphere sovereignty.

CHAPTERS 8–11

Dooyeweerd's most elaborate version of the transcendental critique takes up the first 100 pages of NC I. He had published a shorter English version in 1948. Much is written about the theory, and often critically. We mention here the publications of Klapwijk (1987b) and Clouser (2000). A good exposition of the structure of Dooyeweerd's thinking can be found in Steen (1983).

Vollenhoven's lecture notes (*Isagôgè Philosophiae*) were translated and published as *Introduction to Philosophy* with an introductory commentary by Tol (Vollenhoven, 2005). It contains the basic ideas of his philosophy. A more explicit use of the Bible and a more self-conscious relationship with theology is evident in writers like Seerveld (1980), Geertsema (2021), Olthuis (1997) and Wolterstorff (1983).

Thorough discussion of Dooyeweerd's views on being human can be found in Blosser (1993) and Glas (2010). Dooyeweerd himself also wrote an article on anthropology in 1961. Previously unpublished and partly reconstructed manuscripts by Dooyeweerd on anthropology can be found in the seventh volume of Collected Works Series A, (Dooyeweerd, 2011). Cooper (1989) criticises Dooyeweerd's anthro-

pology from a classical, more theologically inspired approach to the relationship between body and soul.

Geertsema (1970), Brüggeman-Kruijff (1982) and Johan van der Hoeven (1986) all wrote on the transcendental critique. Biblical text and interaction with theology feature in works by Popma (1965), van der Hoeven (1980), Ouweneel (1986) and Glas (1989). Popma's essays (1963) on anthropological themes are unjustly neglected.

CHAPTER 12

The development of the normative practice approach is seen in Hoogland & Jochemsen (2000) and Jochemsen (2006). The approach has been applied in education and nurture (Hegeman et al., 2015), international relations (Polinder, 2024), military ethics (Boshuijzen-van Burken, 2021), development cooperation (Jochemsen & Rademaker, 2019a); communication (Van der Stoep, 2019), food production (Jochemsen & Rademaker, 2019b), animal welfare (Rademaker et al., 2017) and safety in the public domain (Van Steden, Van Putten & Hoogland, 2019).

Hoogland et al. (1995) and Jochemsen & Glas (1997) offer insight into the beginnings of the normative practice approach.

CHAPTER 13

A classic work on the relationship between religion and the growth of modern science is *Religion and the Rise of Modern Science* by Hooykaas (1972). Stafleu (1980, 1989, 1998, 2002 and in other publications) has developed Dooyeweerd's various theories for the natural sciences.

Nienhuis (1995) discusses the relationship between science and worldview in detail from the perspective of modern physics in *Het gezicht van de wereld*. Van Riessen's (1971) widely read *Mondigheid en de machten* discusses the modern shaper of the powers of science, technology and organisation. Haaksma (1999) wrote the book *Van Riessen, filosoof van de techniek*. A number of articles, lectures and essays by Vlot (2002) on natural science, technology and faith are collected in the posthumously published *Tijd voor de eeuwigheid. De techniek staat voor iets*. In *Tegendraads nadenken over techniek*, Egbert Schuurman (2014) outlines his perspective on faith, technology and society.

CHAPTER 14

On Dooyeweerd's approach to economics with reference to authors who have responded to it, see J. Hengstmengel (2012, 2013); Goudzwaard & Jongeneel (2014); Jongeneel (2019). Also, on globalisation, poverty and social justice, see Goudzwaard et al. (2007) and the English author Storkey (1979, 1986).

Van der Kooy (1964, 1971) responds to the work of Haan, another economist who had studied Dooyeweerd in depth (Haan, 1972, 1974). Hengstmengel (2001) and Kee (1996), both refer to authors who reacted to Dooyeweerd. Jongeneel (1996) wrote on a normative economics. The *Verantwoording* series includes a number of titles on broader themes such as sustainable management of the earth (Jochemsen & Van der Stoep, 2023), development cooperation (Buijs et al., 2001) and economics in relation to Calvin's theology (Jongeneel, 2012).

CHAPTER 15

Dooyeweerd discusses his political theory among other subjects in *NC* (part III). *Until Justice & Peace Embrace* (1983), by Wolterstorff, opts for justice and peace as dominant values for politics and government. Skillen provides a biblical, historical and contemporary introduction to Christian thinking on politics in *The Good of Politics* (2014). Koyzis (2024) discusses the political involvement of Christians in a broken world in *Citizenship Without Illusions: A Christian Guide to Political Engagement*.

De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee [*A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*], part III presents Dooyeweerd's own political theory (see also Dooyeweerd, 2013b). Kuiper elaborates on Dooyeweerd's vision for practical politics in *Dienstbare politiek* (2011). Zwart (1996) and Klop (1996) present an overview of Dooyeweerd and other reformational thinkers on the philosophy of law, state and politics.

CHAPTER 16

Glas applied the normative practice approach in psychiatry (2009; 2019a). In Glas 2019c the relationship between the normative practice approach is connected to social contract theory. More about social contract theory can be found online in e.g. the Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (D'Agostino et al., 2024).

Jochemsen et al. (2006) connected the normative practice model for healthcare with other practices. Cusveller (2004) wrote on the meaning dimension in nursing care. In another publication he compared the normative practice approach with other approaches to ethics in the neo-Calvinist tradition (Cusveller, 2021).

CHAPTER 17

McIntire et al. (1985) evaluate the significance of Dooyeweerd's thinking for philosophy, the sciences and society. Geertsema et al. (1994) similarly evaluate the scope and topicality of Dooyeweerd's contribution.

SPECIFIC SUBJECTS

We couldn't include separate chapters on art, law, history and sociology in Part 2, so Dooyeweerd's contribution to thinking in those areas has not received the attention it deserves. But we refer readers to our Chapter 11, where many references can be found to that contribution. Here we offer some supplementation for these and other subject areas.

Dooyeweerd's professional expertise was in law, and he wrote beautiful and impressive articles and books about it. He found in Hendrik van Eikema Hommes not only a successor at VU University, but a faithful pupil who elaborated the ideas of his mentor in depth in the relatively short time that he lived. Early doctoral students wrote on the rule of law (Mekkes, 1940) and on the origins of the principle of sphere sovereignty (Dengerink, 1948). Cliteur (1983) calls Dooyeweerd's legal philosophy highly original and fundamental and believes it has received too little attention.

See: Van Eikema Hommes (1972), Soeteman (1994) and Jaap Zwart (1996) for an overview of Dooyeweerd's ideas in jurisprudence. Alis Koekkoek (1982a, 1982b) relates Dooyeweerd's legal philosophy to party politics.

Birtwistle (1996) provides a useful summary of views on art criticism and aesthetics by Dooyeweerd's students (Rookmaaker, 1970; Seerveld, 1980, 1985, 1995) and other Christian philosophers, such as Wolterstorff (1980). He points to the contributions of Luttikhuizen (1995) and Zuidervaart (1995). Zuidervaart has continued to concern himself with aesthetics (e.g. in Zuidervaart, 2004). Dengerink-Chaplin

(2020) deserves special mention; she was one of the first to engage in depth with the work of Susanne Langer. See also Dengerink-Chaplin & Brand (1999).

Many writings of historian and philosopher of history, Smit, have been translated into English by Morton & Van Dyke (2002). Smit (1955) follows the thinking of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven and persistently asks the question about the meaning of history (Lettinck, 1987). Klapwijk (1987a) collected Smit's texts. Kuiper (1996) wrote an introduction to philosophy of history.

Theologian Gordon J. Spykman (1992) writes about the impossibility of studying dogmatics without philosophical reflection. He argues that the philosophy of the Amsterdam school (Dooyeweerd, Vollenhoven) offers fertile ground and solid distinctions for such reflection.

André Troost (1983, 2004) points at the importance of the concept of ethos and analyses the fundamental presuppositions and structure of theological thinking.

Little has been written recently from a Dooyeweerdian perspective on (neuro) psychology. Psychologist Harry Van Belle (2014, 2019), wrote about paradigm shifts in psychology and on his years of practice as a psychotherapist. Glas has dealt with the philosophy of neuroscience (Glas, 2002, 2023).

Ouweneel (1984, 1986) not only defends Dooyeweerd's concept of the heart, but also draws a straight line from Dooyeweerd's anthropology to today's psychology. Theologian and psychologist Loonstra (2018) analyses the relationship between psychotherapy and philosophy of life.

Finally, we point to publications on sociology and societal issues. Van Steden (2023) deals with public safety. Maarten and Nienke Verkerk (Verkerk, 1997; Verkerk & Verkerk-Vegter, 2000) write about the place of women and human relations in the 21st century. Van Mulligen (2017) writes an intellectual biography of Schuurman. Griffioen (2003) gives a contrarian view on the courage to stick to choices in a culture that is fascinated by the excessive.

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DUTCH EDITION

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ENGLISH EDITION

David Hanson provided the English translation of our book. We are more than grateful for all the work he has done, and we recall the collaboration with pleasure. There were many discussions on both content and language. David's English sense of humour is irresistible. His love of nature and gardens is reflected here and there.

A notable feature of the translation is that in places the text is even clearer than the Dutch original. Richard Gunton and Rudi Hayward kept up a running commentary on his progress with critical questions and friendly insistence on clarity and consistency. We thank them both sincerely for their commitment. It's our hope and prayer that this English edition will stimulate renewed (Christian) reflection among readers on nature, on being human and on society.

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David Hanson (1939), Emmanuel College, Cambridge, was consultant surgeon at the General Infirmary at Leeds and senior lecturer in surgery until 2004. His connection with the Netherlands and reformational philosophy began in 1964. He represented the (then) International Association for Reformed Faith and Action in Britain and his wife, Ruth, organised many of their international conferences. They are privileged to have known scholars in every generation of this philosophical movement.

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